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Biblical Exegesis without Authorial Intention?

*Interdisciplinary Approaches to Authorship
and Meaning*

Edited by

Clarissa Breu



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Breu, Clarissa, editor.

Title: Biblical exegesis without authorial intention? : interdisciplinary approaches to authorship and meaning / edited by Clarissa Breu.

Description: Boston : Brill, 2019. | Series: Biblical interpretation series, ISSN 0928-0731 ; volume 172 | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2019003771 (print) | LCCN 2019006416 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004379558 (E-book) | ISBN 9789004395817 (hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible—Authorship. | Postmodernism—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Bible—Criticism, interpretation, etc.

Classification: LCC BS519 (ebook) | LCC BS519 .B53 2019 (print) | DDC 220.6/6—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019003771>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0928-0731

ISBN 978-90-04-39581-7 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-37955-8 (e-book)

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For Alma, my messy flat mate and teacher



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Acknowledgements

In December 2016, a small group of scholars met in Vienna to discuss the role of the author in textual interpretation. The aim of the conference “Exegesis without Authorial Intention? Approaches to Textual Meaning” was to gather colleagues who share an interest in (postmodern) literary theory and New Testament exegesis. It led to the special experience of meeting other scholars passionate about their theoretical approaches and still respectful of other opinions. It led to lively discussions that did not lack humor. It also led to continued exchange between participants and to the proposal by an attending guest, Jochen Flebbe, of an additional paper to this volume. Michal Beth Dinkler and Gregory Peter Fewster also were willing to contribute. Special thanks are therefore due to the participants of the conference and the contributors to this volume. They showed me how fruitful and inspiring academia can be.

I am also very grateful to my doctoral supervisor Markus Öhler, who encouraged me to organize a conference during the process of writing my PhD-thesis and to publish the papers read there. Thank you for all the support!

Thanks go to the Protestant Theology Faculty of Vienna, who contributed to the conference and the publication of this volume. Eva E. Holder proofread the whole volume within an impressively short time and with an equally impressive dedication to every detail. Adalbert Raab helped a lot to accomplish the feat of compiling the index. Thank you both for your endurance!

I am honored to publish this book with Brill Academic. Thanks go to Paul N. Anderson for accepting it for the Biblical Interpretation Series and to Liesbeth Hugenholtz for her competent, friendly and patient supervision.

My husband Johannes M. Modeß accompanied me – like always – along every step of the way. Our daughter Alma took her first steps during the process of publication.

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Authors Dead and Resurrected

Clarissa Breu

Sometimes, the special occasion arrives for you to meet the author of your favorite book, to attend an interview with the director after a movie, to read about a composer's conception of the piece she composed. Sometimes, these and other situations are great experiences, but often they are disappointing. Maybe you had elaborate thoughts on a certain detail in a book. You ask the author what he meant, and the author looks at you with astonishment, stating that he did not think about this detail at all. He destroys your interpretation with his "No, I didn't mean to say that." Maybe you imagined how the director of your favorite movie might be in real life. Then you learn about her bad habits, drug addiction or racism, and suddenly her film does not seem that great anymore.

Sometimes, meeting the author destroys your previous experiences with his work of art. A dead author makes that easier. You cannot ask him about the "real meaning" of his artwork anymore. His "No, I didn't mean to say that" remains unsaid and unheard. This is what Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" is suggesting: "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author."¹ In order to exhaust the endless number of possible readings in a text, the reader must be freed from the authorial claim to know the "real meaning." Roland Barthes is one among many: William Wimsatt/Monroe Beardsley, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, Julia Kristeva and others question the importance of the author in the process of meaning-making. They slightly differ in their approaches, but they share the assumptions of the linguistic turn.

Since the linguistic turn, language has come to be seen as a system of its own that creates reality and meaning. An author is only part of this system that antecedes and exceeds her; she is an effect of language, not its origin. The author is thus not the origin of a text but rather the language system that enables her to write and also constrains her up to a certain point. The importance of

1 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 148.

language calls into question the accessibility of authorial intention and therefore also the importance of this category in interpretation.

Different theorists have expressed this insight in different ways. It is therefore too easy to simply state a “death of the author” and proclaim his “resurrection,” just because he is still a category in interpretation processes. The notion “death of the author” can refer to many different kinds of dying, to many different kinds of authors. But it never meant that the category of “author” should play no role at all in textual interpretation. It is not even entirely clear whether Roland Barthes expressed a new vision or promulgated an already existing reality. Also, an author’s resurrection – or, as Gregory Peter Fewster expresses it in this volume, “haunting” – is not excluded by the notion of “death of the author.” In Michel Foucault’s theory, for example, the author is resurrected as part of a discourse, as an author-function. But I do not want to anticipate all of the theoretical details presented in the different chapters. Instead, I would like to point to the question as to why a volume about authorship after all of the “death-and-resurrection-debates” can still add to the discourse of biblical studies.

First, the variety of approaches in this volume shows that biblical studies could make use of much more differentiated views on the author than are predominantly presumed within the discipline. Particularly exegetical commentaries tend to reconstruct details about the historical person behind the text and hardly ever debate the category of “author” and its role in the process of interpretation.

Second, a new focus on the category of “author” would not only affect views on the author but the whole practice of exegesis. Questions of authorship intermingle with questions of authority, textual agency, right and wrong interpretations, actualization of texts, the Bible as God’s Word, *verbum externum*, the process of meaning-making, the role of biblical studies within interdisciplinary exchange, etc. All in all, the academic role of biblical studies depends on the importance and place it attributes to the author. To consider the author on the basis of literary theory is therefore a fruitful addition to the discipline’s self-reflexive practice and to interdisciplinary exchange.

This volume is an effect of interdisciplinarity. All of the papers deal with philosophical/literary/psychological theories. Sandra Heinen and Peter Clar contribute to the volume two different approaches from the point of view of literary studies, which had a fruitful impact on other contributions. Hannah Strømme offers a theoretical basis for the interdisciplinary orientation of biblical studies.

Due to the interdisciplinarity and variety of approaches discussed, no two of the chapters deal with the same approach: Some discuss the same biblical

authors,² others the same philosophical authors, but always from different angles. I would therefore prefer to see the order of this volume not as linear or as a categorization of different chapters. Instead, cross references show how they are all interwoven like a *Rhizome*. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari develop this notion, imagining a web of roots without center and origin.³ The volume thus performs what it says about authorship: The author is not seen as a text's center and origin holding the threads of meaning in his or her hands, but as interwoven into a web of language, text(s) and reader(s). The different papers answer the question of what this web looks like from various angles. I have nonetheless attempted to put texts together that illuminate each other and hope that the reader enjoys following the different threads throughout the volume.

Sandra Heinen reflects on the notion of the "implied author" as construed by readers, based on textual and extra-textual information about the author. She applies this author construct to biblical texts. Heinen stresses that "intention" as a category is still relevant: It is part of the reading process, situates a text within a certain cultural context and is especially important as far as biblical texts that claim to convey truth are concerned. The category of authorial intention helps to limit the variety of possible meanings to the most probable ones. Nonetheless, postmodern literary theory has had an effect on the way the author is conceived within literary studies: "[... T]he return of the author to literary studies does not mean that pre-poststructuralist habits are being resumed. Instead, there has been a shift of focus from the search for authorial intention to analyzing mechanisms of authorship in specific social contexts."⁴

Her text is followed by Oda Wischmeyer's "Author – Text – Intention: A Case Study on the Letter of James." Wischmeyer also stresses the importance of authorial intention for biblical studies. She shows that authorship of New Testament texts has always been discussed and paired with the question of authority. She points to the importance of both *intentio operis* and *intentio auctoris*. She states, "The author has not died [...], but the significance of the text has flourished."⁵ Intention is an essential category in text interpretation, because readers find a particular intention encapsulated in the text and can react to it. Moreover, authorial intention confronts them with a person and

2 It does not come as a surprise that Paul plays an important part in this volume: In contrast to other New Testament authors, he appears as a graspable person, one who says "I" frequently and narrates about himself and his life.

3 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Introduction," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3–28.

4 Sandra Heinen, in this volume, 14.

5 Oda Wischmeyer, in this volume, 31.

prevents them from mirroring their own personality into the text they read. Wischmeyer explains the importance of the author by referring to the different evaluations of the Letter of James, depending on who is presumed as its author.

Jochen Flebbe draws on Umberto Eco's *intentio operis*. He stresses the inaccessibility of textual intention to author and reader alike, since it lies in the structure of the text. Flebbe establishes the *intentio operis* as the surplus of every text, as opposed to all kinds of interpretations that use the category of intention for their own purposes. In this surplus, he assumes the place of God as the inaccessible element within biblical texts. In a final paragraph, he also mentions the possibility of integrating Julia Kristeva's "universal intertext" into theological thinking.

Peter Clar, then, takes a closer look at Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. His text offers a dialogue between Kristeva's and Paul de Man's reflections on authorship. In the outworking of their thinking, authorial intention is present but inaccessible. The author is not central and the origin of his text but rather a link between centers. The author is also a reader; he or she is part of the text and emerges in the process of reading and writing. The author is a paradox, because he or she emerges from language and creates language. As the author is thus text, reader and language, he or she "can never be completely erased without causing the reason for his disappearance [...] also to disappear [...]"⁶ Consequently, there is no hierarchy between the author and the reader, the object "text" and the subject "author."

Michal Beth Dinkler also questions the subject/object dichotomy often established in interpretative processes. Her text shows how biblical studies should move from the distinction between *exegesis* and *eisegesis* to *diegesis*, leading between texts and readers as two active agents, and understands interpretation as similar to narration. "The author functions as a catalyst for an interaction between text and reader, which cannot be managed or predicted."⁷ She then applies this theory to Paul and his Corinthian correspondence, establishing *Ekphrasis* as a moment of textual agency.

Michal Beth Dinkler's skepticism regarding a notion of exegesis that "leads out" the meaning contained in a text is also reflected in Hannah M. Strømmen's chapter. Like Dinkler, Strømmen stresses the meaning-creating role of the interpretative process. She describes reception history as an essential part of biblical studies, connecting it with the notion of "veering" bibles. Bibles veer, that is, they can be configured within different communities, resulting

⁶ Peter Clar, in this volume, 67.

⁷ Michal Beth Dinkler, in this volume, 82.

in contingent meanings. “The Bible” does not exist before its interpretation. Its historical origin (or meaning) is only one context among many: “If biblical studies follow what Barthes and Foucault set in motion, then a shift takes place from the search for an authorial origin and anchor for meaning to tracing the constructions of meaning in interpretations of texts [...]”⁸ Strømme bases this thought on Derrida’s theory of the “supplement.” She states that different contexts proffer different texts and meanings but that these texts also influence the contexts they come from.

Stephen Moore’s text goes in a similar direction, as he also points to the legitimacy of different interpretations within different communities. His thoughts are based on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of texts as machines that work independently of their author. Moore does not conceive of exegesis as based on a meaning interior to the text and its claim to communicate something but rather as based upon expression and the construction of meaning. Expression is an event that expresses what was previously unexpressed.

In her text on author-names in the New Testament, Clarissa Breu focuses on Foucault’s “author-functions” and Derrida’s “iterability.” Based on these theories, she compares the functions of author-names to the functions of hashtags: They integrate an author into a referential system; they can be used by anyone, not only by the original author; and they label something as belonging to a certain discourse. Her chapter shows how the functions of hashtags apply to author-names in the New Testament, especially in Revelation, but also in John, Luke and the Pauline letters. She states that a notion of authorship based on Derrida and Foucault is closer to notions of authorship in antiquity than first impressions suggest.

Gregory Peter Fewster also explores the connection between postmodern theory and notions of authorship in antiquity, with a special focus on author-names. He establishes the category of “haunting” as something between death and resurrection and juxtaposes this category with the material history of texts. He shows how material texts are attributed to authors who haunt them through editors and copyists: “[.... T]he names of authors of texts persist and mediate readers’ experiences of text-objects even from beyond the authors’ graves.”⁹ The examples of two manuscripts of Paul show how differently authorial configurations can haunt a text.

A. K. M. Adam reveals how the unconscious haunts exegesis. The unconscious undermines intentional productions of texts and also exegetes who try to reveal intentions within texts. A metaexegesis of texts dealing with the

8 Hannah M. Strømme, in this volume, 98.

9 Gregory Peter Fewster, in this volume, 164.

Pauline notion of the law from a psychological point of view reveals how exegesis often stabilizes ideas biased against Judaism. He detects a lack of awareness about the effects of the unconscious. The role of the unconscious in the production of texts calls into question the category of authorial intention: “‘Intention’ cannot be a simple, single, unqualified phenomenon in itself; it is often opaque even to the author-agent, and how much more to a critical observer relatively distant from the agent-author!”¹⁰

Henning Hupe adds to the debate about the Gospel of Mark, which is still often underestimated as a theological text. Conceiving the text as a choreography that includes readers in its performance, he describes Mark as a “choreographer of the absent.”¹¹ According to Hupe, Mark as a choreographer of an ungraspable message is himself ungraspable.

As the reader may have noticed already, this volume collects a great variety of theoretical approaches that are then applied to various New Testament texts. They have in common that they do not take the category of authorial intention for granted. I hope that their variety can be an impulse within exegesis to revisit the category of authorship – and especially the category of authorial intention.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this volume follow *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, edited by John F. Kutsko, Bob Buller and Billie J. Collins. 2nd ed. Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014.

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- Barthes, Roland. “The Death of the Author.” In *Image, Music, Text*, 142–148. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. “Introduction.” In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 3–28. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

¹⁰ A. K. M. Adam, in this volume, 204.

¹¹ Henning Hupe, in this volume, 225.

Exegesis without Authorial Intention? On the Role of the “Author Construct” in Text Interpretation

Sandra Heinen

1 Introduction

This volume's thematic focus on “biblical exegesis without authorial intention” seems to be based on two tacit premises: on the one hand, the assumption that exegesis is – or used to be – commonly concerned with authorial intention and, on the other hand, the idea that such a concern for authorial intention is – or should be – a thing of the past, which is why the volume attempts to find alternatives. As a literary scholar with no training in and little knowledge of the interpretation of religious texts, I will largely leave aside the empirical question of what role historical or hypothetical authors and their intentions might have played or still play in the disciplinary practice(s) of exegesis. Instead, I will discuss the role of the author in text interpretation more generally, from the vantage point of literary studies. In the first part of this chapter, I will briefly outline the changing role of the author in literary studies and look in particular at the charges brought against the concept at the hands of New Criticism and poststructuralism. In the second section, I will discuss why and under which conditions the author is, in my opinion, still a useful category in the interpretation of texts. I will propose ways of working with the category which avoid falling into the trap of the “intentional fallacy.” In the third part of this paper, I will consider a number of issues that seem to me to be relevant when the question of authorship is discussed with regard to biblical texts. My thoughts here will necessarily be those of an outsider to the field and will draw on the other contributions to this volume, besides a number of other theological discussions of authorship.

2 New Criticism and Poststructuralism's Criticism of the Author

The most frequently quoted attacks on the use of the author as a reference point in text interpretation are William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley's criticism of the “Intentional Fallacy” (1946), Roland Barthes' proclamation of

the “Death of the Author” (1967) and Michel Foucault’s analysis of the “author-function” (1968). What all three texts have in common is a strong objection to the notion of a god-like author, whom literary studies inherited from the Romantics. Romanticism’s emphatic model of authorship assumed a close tie between author and text, insofar as texts were seen as expressive of their authors.¹ Such an understanding of authorship paved the way for readings of texts in light of their authors’ lives, of biographical contextualizations of literary texts and inferences about authors’ mindsets drawn from the “textual evidence” of their literary productions. Interpretative moves such as these were questioned by New Critics and poststructuralists alike as being too limiting.

Wimsatt and Beardsley vigorously censure any attempts to recover the author’s intention from extratextual evidence in order to understand a text. They doubt that an author’s intention – understood as the “design or plan in the author’s mind”² – can ever be identified. Even if such a reconstruction were possible, for instance, on the basis of explicit declarations of intent, it should, in the opinion of Wimsatt and Beardsley, play no role in the interpretation and evaluation of the final product, since an author’s intention in composing a text cannot be equated with the meaning of the finished work, nor should a text be reduced to an articulated intention. Instead, it is the finished work alone which should be the object of interpretation and evaluation: “Judging a poem is like judging a pudding or a machine. One demands that it work.”³ If extratextual information is needed for a poem to be understood, this is a sign of the poem’s failure to be meaningful.

The poststructuralist critique of the author formulated two decades later is also directed against a model of literary authorship that can be traced back to Romanticism. Published in the late 1960s, both Barthes’ and Foucault’s respective criticisms of the author can be seen in the context of a contemporaneously more general rejection of authorities and social and cultural mechanisms of control. In his polemical essay, Barthes celebrates “the death of the author” as one might the death of an oppressive tyrant. Significantly, it is the “Author”⁴ with a capital A whom Barthes wants to have declared dead: the “Author-God”⁵ who is the origin and sole creator of his text and who controls his text’s meaning. In his place Barthes wants to see the scriptor, who is little more than the

1 See Jochen Flebbe, in this volume, 43–45.

2 William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” *The Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 (1946): 469. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27537676>.

3 Ibid.

4 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148.

5 Ibid., 146.

tool by which a text is assembled and who has no authority over the text's meaning, thus opening the text up for readers' interpretations.

Michel Foucault shares with Barthes the critical assessment of the author as an instrument of ideological control: "The author allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations."⁶ When Foucault discusses the author, he is not referring to the historical person whose writing activity resulted in a text but to a category of reception, the "author-function,"⁷ that is, a conventionalized way of dealing with texts that are already in circulation. Thus, Foucault maintains that "the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction."⁸ The author-function narrows a text's potential meaning by providing an interpretational framework, most obviously by situating the text in the context of an author's other works. Aspects of a text that can be linked to similar aspects in other texts by the same author receive a prominence that prefigures the interpretation. In contrast, other aspects of the same text, which undermine the coherence of the author's body of work, might be downplayed as aberrations or mistakes. The author-function thus facilitates the search for a text's meaning, insofar as it favors coherent interpretations, while neutralizing ambiguity, irritation and contradiction.

Foucault and Barthes' criticism can be understood as a general criticism of the desire to (re)construct a text's (sole) meaning, because both thinkers favor, for ideological reasons, ambivalence and polysemy. It is no coincidence that they write their criticism of the author with a specific kind of text in mind, that is, a literary text. Literature is in both Barthes' and Foucault's arguments associated with ambiguity and autonomy, forces that are contained by the author-function. Although Barthes and Foucault differ in their assessment of the feasibility of a liberation (Barthes regards the new writing of his time as liberated, while Foucault believes that a discourse without restrictions and, more particularly, a world where fiction is not regulated by some means are impossible), they share a critical stance towards any containment. In response to their criticism, looking beyond the author in search of alternative moorings on which to anchor a text's meaning would therefore be beside the point. It might be acceptable for the New Critics to speak of "textual intention" instead

6 Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Essential Works by Foucault (New York: The New Press, 1998), 221.

7 Ibid., 222, and passim.

8 Ibid., 221.

of “authorial intention”; from the poststructuralist perspective, however, this would be no more than putting old wine in new wineskins.

3 The Return of the Author as a Readerly Construct

Despite the poststructuralists’ influential critique, the author has remained one of the most central reference points in literary studies. If information about a text’s author is available, it continues to be used in various ways in the academic handling of the text. Not only are texts still edited, catalogued and sorted by author, but recourse to biographical information about an author also heavily influences the perceived significance of a text. Scholarly textual interpretations persist in developing arguments in relation to an author’s biography and his presumed or ascribed intention.⁹ The reliance on authors might often be implicit or glossed over by putting the emphasis elsewhere, for example on the cultural context. However, despite this shift away from the individual originator, cultural contextualizations of literary works rely on authors, for it is only by way of the author that a text can be culturally positioned (nationally, ethnically, regionally, historically or ideologically). Thus, although the concept of “author” might be one of the most contested categories in literary theory, it is far from dead in the practice of literary scholarship.

The endurance of the author concept cannot simply be ascribed to the tenacity of traditional approaches to literature. One of the main reasons for its durability seems rather to be the fact that the theoretical objections raised against it are counterintuitive. The New Critics’ opinion that it is theoretically unsound to interpret a text in terms of an *actual* authorial intention might be convincing for the reasons already mentioned: Intentions are complicated phenomena, often confused and hardly ever pure; to understand one’s own intentions comprehensively is already difficult. To reconstruct someone else’s in their full complexity, on the basis of a piece of writing, seems to be tantamount to impossible, in particular if the person whose intention we are interested in discovering can neither confirm nor refute our speculations simply by reason of being long deceased. And even where we might have access to (some of) an author’s intentions – in the form of documentary evidence in which they are specified by the author himself or herself – they remain problematic

9 Simone Winko, “Autor-Funktionen: Zur argumentativen Verwendung von Autorkonzepten in der gegenwärtigen literaturwissenschaftlichen Interpretationspraxis,” in *Autorschaft: Positionen und Revisionen: DFG-Symposium 2001*, ed. Heinrich Detering, Germanistische-Symposien-Berichtsbände 24 (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2002), 334–354.

as a reference point in text interpretation, because what an author presents to the public as his or her intentions might well differ from the motives and ideas actually driving the composition of the text. Lastly, intentions and their outcomes tend to part company. Significantly, such discrepancy does not necessarily mean a betrayal of expectations. As Umberto Eco has argued, a text can be meaningful in ways never intended by the author.¹⁰ However, despite these objections to upholding authorial intention as an interpretative goal, any reader is familiar enough with the desire to identify a communicative intention: “Why is he telling me about this?” Or, “What is her point?” Such questions do not only haunt us in our everyday conversations but in all forms of communication: “how we understand spoken language, interpret written texts, and make sense of artworks, is to a significant extent influenced by the search for communicative intentions.”¹¹

So what are possible solutions to this predicament, to the conflict between the inaccessibility of actual intentions and the unreliability of postulated intentions, on the one hand and, on the other, the observation that inferred authorial intentions do play a role in reading texts? One attempt at resolving the dilemma was already made more than half a century ago by Wayne C. Booth, who introduced the concept of the “implied author.” The “implied author” is understood by Booth as the real author’s second self:

As [the writer] writes, he creates not simply an ideal, impersonal “man in general” but an implied version of “himself” that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men’s works. [...] Whether we call this implied author an “official scribe,” or adopt the term recently revived by Kathleen Tillotson – the author’s “second self” – it is clear that the picture the reader gets of this presence is one of the author’s most important effects. However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner – and of course that official scribe will never be neutral toward all values.¹²

10 Umberto Eco, “Between Author and Text,” in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 67–88.

11 Raymond W. Gibbs, *Intentions in the Experience of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4. See also Wischmeyer’s “plea for the combined category of the *intentio auctoris et operis*” in her contribution to this volume, 38. She asks, “[W]hy should we read a text when we were not interested in its *authorial* intention and at least partly convinced that we are able to find it *in the text*?”

12 Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 70–71.

The concept of the “implied author” has been intensively discussed in literary studies, and alternatives have been proposed and rejected. There is no need to recapitulate here the different positions of this debate, which has been done repeatedly and thoroughly.¹³ In this context, it is sufficient to point out that Booth merges two operations of literary scholarship that are usually kept apart, i.e., description and interpretation: “The ‘implied author’ chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices.”¹⁴ In Booth’s conceptualization, the implied author is both a textual phenomenon with a certain agency and a construction made by the reader in the process of reading. It is this second aspect, the idea of the (implied) author being a creation of the reader, that corresponds to the results of a more recent empirical study by Eefje Claassen, who comes to the conclusion that readers who are presented with a text tend to “create a mental representation of someone who has written the text with some purpose,” even if they have no information about the text’s author.¹⁵

These observations are compatible with Foucault’s analysis of the author-function, which he claims is “the result of a complex operation that constructs a certain being of reason that we call ‘author.’”¹⁶ The “recognition” of an author’s individual characteristics is, for Foucault, “only a projection, in more or less psychologizing terms, of the operations we force texts to undergo, the connections we make, the traits we establish as pertinent, the continuities we recognize, or the exclusions we practice.”¹⁷ To assume that the reader constructs a mental image of the author while reading shifts the focus from the real author’s actual intention (which cannot be recovered) to the (re)construction of such an intention by the reader. If “authorial intention” is conceptualized as a reader construct, the intentional fallacy is successfully bypassed, while the impact that assumptions about a text’s author have on the text’s meaning is recognized.

“Meaning” here, of course, does not precede the reading process but rather is its outcome.¹⁸ Meaning ascribed to a text can never be the meaning intended but only the meaning as (re)constructed by the reader, however conventionally

13 See, e.g., Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, *The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*, Narratologia 9 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

14 Booth, *Rhetoric*, 74–75.

15 Eefje Claassen, *Author Representations in Literary Reading*, Linguistic Approaches to Literature 11 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2012), 211.

16 Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 213.

17 Ibid., 213–214.

18 See also Peter Clar, in this volume, 61: “The author, however, not only *is* also reader, he/she exists because he/she is created by the reader.”

it might be ascribed to the author. Yet just because something is a construct, it is not necessarily wrong, misguided or devoid of utility. While an ascribed meaning cannot be true in the strict sense of the word, it can certainly be plausible, and the author has proved to be a “useful” category of interpretation, precisely because it provides a means of limiting the potential meanings of a text by giving more plausibility to some interpretations than to others.¹⁹

The construction of textual meaning inevitably goes hand in hand with the construction of an image of its author. The mental construction of an authorial image is in part based on the text under consideration (“he prefers metaphors from a certain source domain,” “she is very logical,” “he is in command of a certain language”) and in part on extratextual pieces of information that a reader might have had even before starting to read such a text (“he lived in a certain century in a certain place,” “she died very young”).²⁰ A reader’s mental image of an author is therefore not only the result of reading but can also pre-structure an interpretation. Potential readers might expect an author to be humorous, witty or knowledgeable, and these expectations will inevitably guide their reading when they take up one of the author’s texts for the first time. During the process of reading, the readers’ expectations will undergo constant modification and their idea of the author become more refined. This elaborated image of the author will then serve to influence future readings of the author’s works. Authors themselves, of course, are not ignorant of their readers’ interpretative strategies and exploit them for their own purposes. They can use their texts and other media to influence the image readers develop of themselves. Thus, the concept of the “author construct,” the assumption that readers produce mental images of authors and their intentions, can also provide a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of authorial self-fashioning.²¹ “The author” and “authorial intention” are useful interpretative categories

19 Fotis Jannidis, “Der nützliche Autor: Möglichkeiten eines Begriffs zwischen Text und historischem Kontext,” in *Die Rückkehr des Autors: Zur Erneuerung eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, ed. Fotis Jannidis et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 386.

20 Claassen, *Author Representation*, 213 aligns the different sources of information with different author positions in the narratological model of communication; she thus considers textual information to lead to a mental representation of the implied author, while extratextual information influences the construction of an image of the empirical author. Additionally, Claassen maintains that the two processes can interact in a third version of readerly author construction. I do not assume the construction of distinct author models, but consider this third option to be the most common procedure. See the similar conceptualization by William Irwin, as summarized – and rejected – by Gregory Peter Fewster, in this volume, 158–160.

21 Sandra Heinen, *Literarische Inszenierung von Autorschaft: Geschlechtsspezifische Autorschaftsmodelle in der englischen Romantik* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2006).

in literary studies, as long as they are understood as mental representations inferred by readers on the basis of textual and extratextual information available to them. Thus, the return of the author to literary studies does not mean that pre-poststructuralist habits are being resumed.²² Instead, there has been a shift of focus from the search for authorial intention to analyzing mechanisms of authorship in specific social contexts.

4 The Role of the Author Construct for Interpretations of Biblical Texts

The compositional history of the “Book of books” complicates the application of the standard literary model of text production and authorship to the Bible. While the literary default model of authorship assumes that texts are the product of exactly one identifiable author and exist in one final version, the Bible was written by multiple authors and reworked and rewritten over generations.²³ The fact that the Bible (the use of the singular noun is of course already a simplification, here accepted for pragmatic reasons) is the result of a process of multiple revisions means that recovering an original text attributable to one specific author is as impossible as that of identifying distinct stages of the transformation or all the people involved in bringing about the final product.²⁴ Somewhat ironically, sacred texts such as the Bible, with their particular compositional history, seem to embody what Roland Barthes envisioned in 1967 as the future of literature, when he proclaimed the death of the “Author-God” and pronounced texts to be the product not of a single human creator but as essentially intertextual, a “tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture.”²⁵

22 Christian Sieg and Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, “Einleitung: Autorschaften im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Politik,” in *Autorschaften im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Politik*, Religion und Politik 8 (Würzburg: Ergon 2014), 7–8.

23 A similar description of the Qurʾān’s authorship can be found, e.g., in Claude Gilliot, “Reconsidering the Authorship of the Qurʾān,” in *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds, Routledge Studies in Qurʾān (London: Routledge 2007), 88–109.

24 See Matthew D. C. Larsen, who discusses “the *conceptual and theoretical problems* of presupposing an ‘original’ or ‘final’ version of a text in the ancient world” by stressing the fluidity of ancient texts. Matthew D. C. Larsen, “Accidental Publication, Unfinished Texts and the Traditional Goals of New Testament Textual Criticism,” *JSNT* 39, no. 4 (2017): 365, doi: 10.1177/0142064X17705592. Emphasis original. See also Gregory Peter Fewster, in this volume, 167–168.

25 Barthes, “Death of the Author,” 146.

Thus, new critical and poststructuralist critique seems to lose some traction in relation to the Bible: The intentional fallacy, as described by Wimsatt and Beardsley, poses no risk where historical authors and their actual intentions are unidentifiable; and a strong model of authorship, attacked by Barthes and Foucault for its ideological implications, cannot adequately describe the relationship between the Bible and the individuals who contributed to its emergence.²⁶ Because the Hebrew Bible has no traceable authors but is the result of narratives being handed down over centuries, which in this process were subjected to repeated revisions, its authorship must be conceptualized as collective and successive, rather than individual.²⁷ The fact that “people in the ancient Mediterranean had understandings of writing and authorship that differ significantly from the modern views”²⁸ makes an indiscriminate application of the modern term “author” to the New Testament likewise anachronistic, which might even “distort historical reconstruction.”²⁹ Similarly, Nijay Gupta advises: “we must [...] show caution [...] in articulating exactly how the term ‘author’ is being used in the discussion and taking account of various

26 Unless, of course, God is conceived of as the author of the Bible, a position which will not be considered in the following, due to its marginal currency today. See Oda Wischmeyer, in this volume, 31.

27 “Biblical texts have been transmitted anonymously. They are neither temporally nor locally fixed and thus differ significantly from those literary texts that mention author, title and year of publication or composition and about which knowledge concerning the author’s biography is available.” Translation C. B.; German original: “Die [biblischen] Schriften sind anonym überliefert, zeitlich und räumlich nicht fixiert und unterscheiden sich darin grundlegend von jenen literarischen Texten[,] bei denen Autor, Titel, Erscheinungs- und Entstehungsjahr angegeben sind und bei denen Kenntnisse über die Lebensdaten und die Biographie des Autors vorliegen.” Barbara Schmitz, “‘Autorfunktionen’ und ‘Autorfigurationen’: Die Frage nach der Entstehung von Texten aus der Perspektive der Erzähltextanalyse,” in *Prophetie und Königtum: Eine narratologisch-historische Methodologie entwickelt an den Königsbüchern*, FAT 60 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 97; see also Ulrich Berges, “Kollektive Autorschaft im Alten Testament,” in *Autorschaft: Ikonen – Stile – Institutionen*, ed. Christel Meier-Staubach and Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), 29–40.

28 Karen L. King, “What Is an Author?” Ancient Author-Function in the Apocryphon of John and the Apocalypse of John,” in *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*, ed. William E. Arnal et al., BETL 285 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 18.

29 Ibid., 17. In order to avoid such a distortion, King keeps her “terminology as close as possible to the materials and technologies in use” in antiquity, for example, by distinguishing composing from inscribing, copying, correcting or editing (ibid., 20).

levels of input and sources that contribute to the generation and completion of a writing.”³⁰

However, the search for a communicative intention behind a text is not automatically aborted whenever the modern model of individual authorship does not apply. Any interpretation of the Bible's content – as that of any other text – is likely to be based upon the premise that someone must have intended to produce something meaningful and that there is therefore some meaning “in” the text which is worth decoding.³¹ The distinctive relationship of biblical texts to reality, moreover, their claim that they tell an ultimate truth about the real world and their promise to provide moral guidelines for our worldly behavior, rather than being detached products of the imagination, all lend a particular urgency to finding out “what they are meant to say.” The concept of the “author construct” can easily accommodate such variations: “Readers’ cognitive processes that are involved in the reading of literature will likely vary,” not only with the character of the individual reader and “the context in which the reading takes place,” but also according to “the nature and characteristics of the text [...]”. These three factors will presumably also affect readers’ constructions of a context model, including their representation of an author concept.”³² Hence, where authorship is assumed to be collective and successive, the reader who is aware of this is likely to construct not one, but several, authorial images on the basis of the text in question. Layers or selected aspects of the text might then be ascribed to individual (hypothetical) authors.³³ They might also be ascribed to groups of authors, as when the Scriptures are conceptualized as a form of collective memory, as proposed by Sandra Huebenthal. In such a reading, the search for a historical author or writer becomes secondary, while it allows for

30 Nijay Gupta, “What Is in a Name? The Hermeneutics of Authorship Analysis Concerning Colossians,” *CurBR* 11, no. 2 (2013): 210, doi: 10.1177/1476993X12439885.

31 Different opinions on this issue are reflected in this volume; cf. e.g., Oda Wischmeyer, 37, and Stephen D. Moore, 115.

32 Claassen, *Author Representation*, 230.

33 This is similarly argued by Barbara Schmitz (who, also drawing on Jannidis, calls such author images “author figurations”), who underlines that these author constructions remain necessarily hypothetical for ancient biblical texts, since they can only be inferred from the text itself. Schmitz, “Autorfunktionen,” 101. A comparable proposal to apply narratological tools to the Bible was made by Sönke Finnern, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese: Eine integrative Methode der Erzählanalyse und ihr Ertrag am Beispiel von Matthäus 28*, WUNT 2/285 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), who favors a cognitive approach and the assumption that readers construct author images on the basis of textual and extratextual information, which pre-structures their interpretation.

assumptions about the social group from which a text emerges and to whose identity formation it contributes.³⁴

The model of a readerly “author construct” is a conceptual frame which can be applied on different levels. It can be used as a foundation for text interpretation or for conceptualizing reading strategies on a metalevel. It is compatible with different methodologies, ranging from hermeneutical text readings constructing author images to empirical studies of reading processes or studies in reception history to a combination of text-oriented and reader-oriented approaches. The concept’s potential can be illustrated with reference to articles from the field of biblical scholarship, which either construct author images themselves, identify textual strategies likely to influence author constructions or analyze mechanisms of author construction in other scholars’ interpretations.³⁵

A very specific author construction can, for example, be found in a chapter by J. P. Weinberg on the possible authors of the Hebrew Bible. From textual and extratextual evidence, Weinberg constructs an image of the author of the book of Job, which includes information about the author’s age, his character, his family background and the time in which he lived. By this means, Weinberg arrives at the detailed hypothesis that “it was Elihu, the son of Barachel, the Buzite, from the clan of Ram, a member of the post-exilic Judean Citizen-Temple community, belonging to the intelligentsia in it, who in the middle-second half of the fifth century BCE wrote the book of Job.”³⁶

The form of a text influences but does not predetermine what authorial image readers construct from it. This becomes evident when distinct readings of one text are based on different premises, such as the discussions of the Gospel of Luke undertaken by Jan Runggemeier and Andreas Mauz, respectively. Although Runggemeier stresses the fact that the Gospel is the result of successive revisions, he applies a strong, intentionalist model of authorship in his analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan, which he finds to be

34 Sandra Huebenthal, “Reading the Gospel of Mark as Collective Memory,” in *Social Memory and Social Identity in the Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Samuel Byrskog et al., NTOA/SUNT 116 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2016), 69–87, doi: 10.13109/9783666593758; and Sandra Huebenthal, “Luke 24:13–35, Collective Memory, and Cultural Frames,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels, vol. 3: The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Thomas R. Hatina, SSEJC 16/LNTS 376 (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 85–95.

35 While I, like Nijay Gupta in “What Is in a Name?,” use scholarly articles as evidence of author image constructions, another take on reception studies is suggested by Hannah M. Strømme in her contribution to this volume.

36 J. P. Weinberg, “Authorship and Author in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Bible,” *HS* 44 (2003): 166.

consciously and “strategically reworked” by Luke.³⁷ Mauz, conversely, explicitly distinguishes his own approach to Luke from attempts to identify an individual historical author by stressing that he uses the name “Luke” only as a conventionalized shortcut to refer to a “complex process of writing and editing,” which resulted in the Gospel of Luke.³⁸ The name of the evangelist in his reading thus stands for a collective of authors. Significantly, this assumption does not preclude specifying authorial intentions (Mauz refers, for example, to “the evangelist’s claim to historical accuracy”³⁹), which, however, are unequivocally marked as ascriptions.

Apart from contextually mediated information, both a text’s form and its content influence the process of author construction. Particularly pertinent among textual features are those which themselves foreground the question of authorship, as, for example, author attributions or more elaborate forms of staging authorship. Two actualizations of these techniques have repeatedly been discussed with regard to biblical texts: pseudepigraphy, the historically inaccurate ascription of texts to established authorities and the self-referential representation of composition scenes. In either case, the concept of the “author construct” helps to distinguish two aspects: the image of the author as intended to be conveyed by the text’s actual author (How is authorship staged?) and the construction of an image of the historical authors who are behind the staging (Why is authorship staged in this manner?). The author construct of the intended reader and the author construct of an actual reader do not necessarily collapse, but they will do so whenever the actual reader adopts an observer’s perspective and regards pseudepigraphy or the inclusion of revelation narratives, for instance, as *strategies to stage* authorship.

Such an observer’s perspective is adopted in Karen L. King’s investigation of texts attributed to John, in which King, after having analyzed a range of textual strategies of staging authorship, asks, “To what ends might this author-function be deployed?”⁴⁰ Such a perspective is also foregrounded in some of

37 Jan Rüggeheimer, “Strategisches Erzählen und Strategiewechsel im Umfeld neutestamentlicher Erzähltexte: Das lukanische Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter als Anschauungsbeispiel,” *DIEGESIS* 5, no. 2 (2005): 63.

38 Andreas Mauz, “In Gottesgeschichten verstrickt: Erzählen im christlich-religiösen Diskurs,” in *Wirklichkeitserzählungen: Felder, Formen und Funktionen nicht-literarischen Erzählens*, ed. Christian Klein and Matias Martinez (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2009), 207.

39 Ibid.

40 King, “What Is an Author?” 24. As the quotation shows, King, like other scholars investigating functions of attributing and staging authorship, adopts Foucault’s concept of the “author-function.” It should be pointed out that the term “author-function” is employed by different scholars with at least two different meanings, which can both be traced back to Foucault’s seminal essay but which require distinction: On the one hand,

the contributions to this volume, for example by Clarissa Breu, who asserts with regard to the counter-factual attribution of letters to Paul that the “question is not who the original author really was but why someone could have been interested in adding to #Paul,”⁴¹ or by Gregory Peter Fewster, who points out editorial strategies of the Codex Coislinianus that “conjure up the figure of Paul.”⁴² King, Breu and Fewster thus all work with intentionalist frameworks, without assuming that there is one author with one intention behind the texts they investigate. Fewster, therefore, proposes to speak in the plural of “intentionalities stemming from the numerous human agents and their institutional contexts that participate in a text’s production, transmission and reception,” which become manifest in textual artefacts.⁴³

A number of biblical texts themselves propose models of authorship which distribute authorial activity among several agents, each with specific functions. This is the case whenever God is presented as the ultimate author of a text or text segment, as in the Hebrew Bible narrative of the revelation at Mount Sinai, or in the New Testament Book of Revelation, which is presented as being mediated through “a line of transmission from God to Jesus Christ to his angel to John to God’s slaves.”⁴⁴ In order to better describe the function of such revelation narratives, Andreas Mauz proposes to distinguish between “sacred” and “sanctifying” texts: Whereas a sacred text is defined as a text for which divine authorship is claimed (e.g., the Decalogue, Revelation), a sanctifying text is the means of conveying this claim – in the case of the Decalogue, the narrative of God’s communicating the Ten Commandments to the Israelites and, in the case of Revelation, the prologue detailing the line of transmission.⁴⁵ In either

“author-function” as a position of discourse according to Foucault’s definition and, on the other hand, a narrower and more pragmatic use of “author-function(s)” in reference to functions which the occurrence of the author-function in the first sense might have. While I (like King) here use “author-function” exclusively in the first, original sense, Jannidis, “Der nützliche Autor,” Winko, “Autor-Funktionen,” Schmitz, “Autorfunktionen,” and Clarissa Breu, in this volume, do so in the second sense.

41 Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 143.

42 Gregory Peter Fewster, in this volume, 151.

43 Ibid., 167.

44 King, “What Is an Author?” 28; cf. Breu, in this volume, 132, who states that this line is not simply a linear line “in the expected order.”

45 Andreas Mauz, *Machtworte: Studien zur Poetik des “heiligen Textes,”* HUT 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2016), 51–72. A precise analysis of the authorial self-fashioning in the narratives of the revelation at Mount Sinai is complicated by the ambiguities and tensions within them. See also *ibid.*, 231–234. As Mauz points out, the classification of texts as sanctifying and sanctified can be difficult: “The proposed terminology causes not only the problem of the distinctiveness (or isolability) of these parts but also that of their radius of impact: Is the sanctifying text at a time part of the sanctified text?”; Andreas Mauz,

story, humans function as mediators of a divine message; it is not their authorship in the modern sense that gives authority to the text but, on the contrary, precisely the human agents' lack of authority over the text that they deliver. In these cases, the author constructs of the intended reader, who accepts the sanctified texts to be sacred, and that of a reader following the poetological approach suggested by Mauz, might differ significantly, since for the latter "sacredness" is only a textual phenomenon.⁴⁶ The line between factual and fictional narration is at least blurred, if not transgressed.

One way to deal with this "transgression" is to historicize authorship and its representation. As has been frequently argued, occidental practice and conceptualization of authorship have undergone profound changes, changes to which the forms of the biblical texts bear witness. Weinberg, for example, assumes that the culture in the ancient Near East began to "acknowledge authorship" from the beginning of the first millennium before Christ onward and that this change gave rise to forms of authorial "self-presentation" in the Bible.⁴⁷ A media-based theoretical explanation of the increase in authorial self-fashioning is proposed by Berges, who regards the proliferation of the scroll as the main reason for the emerging representation of writers within texts.⁴⁸ A socio-historical contextualization of strategies to authorize texts is recommended by King, who regards pseudepigraphy as a reaction to various forms of ideological and social opposition.⁴⁹ Both the process of fashioning a text to evoke a certain reading and the suggested reading itself can be described within the theoretical framework offered by the concept of the "author construct."

"'Write What You See and Hear': Methodological Problems of the Poetics of 'Sacred Text': Hildegard's *Protestificatio* as Revelation Narrative," in *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Narratives from the Late Antiquity through to Modern Times*, ed. Constanza Cordoní and Gerhard Langer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 269.

46 Mauz, "Write What You See and Hear," 268: "'Sacred,' in this sense, is not an attribute ascribed on the basis of assumed incidents of revelation or inspiration, but one that is oriented solely on the text's *self description* as being revealed or inspired. 'Sacred' is simply the text that explicitly claims to be such in form of a specific type of *meta-textual self representation*: namely the claim that the text came about thanks to a supernatural intervention."

47 Weinberg, "Authorship and Author," 163.

48 Berges, "Kollektive Autorschaft," 35.

49 King, "What Is an Author?" 19.

5 Conclusion

Speaking about authors in terms of “author constructs” generates some degree of flexibility by allowing for observations on different levels. The constitution of textual meaning is located in the reader’s mind, without ignoring existing patterns of reception which point to the author as the source of this meaning. Thus, the possibility of talking about the author, his strategies and intentions can be reassessed as a valid – and intended – response to texts; through the awareness that such interpretations can only have the status of constructions, the simplistic conflation of textual strategies with historical authors and their intentions can be prevented. In addition, the concept of the “author construct” points the way towards analyses of authorial self-fashioning and second-order observations, such as an analysis of the role of author constructs in interpretation. To exclude the author completely from interpretation, as demanded by the New Critics and envisioned by the poststructuralists, is in my opinion only possible by sacrificing explanatory power and descriptive adequacy.

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Author – Text – Intention: A Case Study on the Letter of James

Oda Wischmeyer

In the old days the novelist, when placing a book on the market, frankly informed his prospective readers in a preface for which reasons, from what point of view, and with what intentions he had written it. It was a good idea. It created by its informality and directness a basic understanding between the author and his public.¹



In New Testament studies, issues of authorship pertain to different topics of exegetical research: to the earliest history of the Christ-confessing communities and to the reliability of the records about the apostles, their traditions and their literary heritage, on the one hand, and to the literary self-fashioning of the authors and the authorial impact of the seminal writings that later achieved the canonical status of the “New Testament,” on the other. This means that from the perspective of New Testament scholarship, the issues in question are at the same time historical and literary ones. Texts can be read as historical documents, that is, as sources, or as pieces of religious literature, perhaps even as religious poetry (the Gospel of John), or as philosophical-moral treatises. The diversity of methodological perspectives affects how scholars define the triad of “author – text – intention.” In my paper, I seek to bring together these different interests that determine the practical work of New Testament exegesis.

1 Stefan Zweig, *Brazil: Land of the Future* (Viking: New York, 1941), 1; German original: Stefan Zweig, *Brasilien: Ein Land der Zukunft*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 2016), 11: “In früheren Zeiten pflegten die Schriftsteller, ehe sie ein Buch an die Öffentlichkeit gaben, eine kleine Vorrede vorzuschicken, in der sie redlich mitteilten, aus welchen Gründen, von welchen Gesichtspunkten aus und in welcher Absicht sie ihr Buch geschrieben. Es war eine gute Gewohnheit. Denn sie schuf durch den Freimut und die direkte Ansprache von vornherin ein richtiges Verständnis zwischen dem Schreibenden und denen, für die es geschrieben war.”

1 The Texts and the Question of the Author

The status and the function of the literary author has often been questioned, negated, modified or reinvented since Roland Barthes' essay "La Mort de l'Auteur" (1968)² and Michel Foucault's talk on the question "Qu'est-ce qu'un Auteur?" (1969).³ The groundbreaking turn from the author to the text that took place in the fields of literary criticism, hermeneutics and cultural studies more than one generation ago⁴ still affects the study of New Testament texts seriously because the question about the author is one of the most important topics of the so-called introductory issues with regard to the books of the canonical New Testament.⁵ New Testament studies address the quest for the author from different angles: Scholars conduct ongoing research on historical authorship and at the same time discuss concepts of literary authorship of the canonical texts of earliest Christianity. Both themes are at stake in this paper.

The traditional authorship of the New Testament books was discussed and again and again confirmed, disputed or denied – not only since the outset of modern historical criticism about the New Testament authors' names and persons as transmitted in the ancient manuscripts first and foremost by the so-called "Younger Tübingen-school" with Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), but already since the times of Papias of Hierapolis (ca. 120 AD) and afterwards by Origen of Alexandria (185–254 AD), up to the great Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–ca. 340 AD). The discussion was necessary, insofar as authorship was regarded as a matter of authority and as one of the two reliable links to the history of earliest Christianity. To clarify, the discussion was not about the authors as persons who produced literature in the sense of prose writing but about their apostolic status and authority.

2 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Aspen Magazine* 5 and 6, item 3 (1967) = Roland Barthes, "La Mort de l'Auteur," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Éric Marty (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), 2: 1211–1217.

3 Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Auteur?" *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 63, no. 3 (1969): 73–104.

4 In what follows I shall only refer to the New Testament. To ask the question of authorship of the texts of the Hebrew Bible and of the Septuagint would mean raising issues quite different from those pertaining to New Testament texts. This distinction also waives a discussion on the "authorship of the Bible" in the Christian sense of the Bible of the Two Testaments because any discussion on this topic would include theological statements. My contribution limits itself to the fields of history and literary theory.

5 Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2013) = Udo Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

The other link was the oral tradition that traced back to the apostles and ultimately to Jesus himself. Jesus' *lógia*, on the side of oral tradition, and the *kýrios* (i.e., the Gospels) and the *apóstolos* (i.e., the Epistles), on the side of the written documents, were collected as the two parts of the New Testament writings and were esteemed as the highest authorities.⁶ In this sense, both historicity and apostolic authorship worked together as guarantors of the truth of the message of the New Testament text corpus. Every single early Christian text that was handed down and read publicly in the assemblies of some or many of the early Christian communities could eventually achieve canonical status only in the case that it had a clear and confirmed connection to what the ancient Church named "apostolic." The authority of a text that was read in the Christian assemblies and that matched the key sentences of the *Apostolicum* – these were the two additional conditions – was grounded in its authenticated authorship by an apostle or by a disciple of an apostle. The abiding importance of a text depended on its authorship. In other words, from the Church Fathers' point of view, authorship, authenticity and authority were closely intertwined. In that sense, authorship was a matter of reliable tradition, not of literary quality or claim. This concept of authorizing authorship, however, is not as far from author concepts in ancient Greek and Roman literature as one would think. Irene Peirano argues:

The author's name does [...] possess abundant *symbolic* meaning for the audience: if they are willing to believe it, it tells them that they are listening to an authoritative version of the tradition and involves them in the process of disseminating this version associated with the poet's name.⁷

Let us have a short look at the historical setting. The earliest texts of the Christ-confessing communities in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy were written from approximately 40 or 50, up to 70 AD, and were collected only some decades later. Others followed during the third generation of the communities. In the manuscripts with complete textual tradition, we find the authors' names at the beginning or at the end of the documents: on the one hand, in the

6 For the whole topic see Oda Wischmeyer, "Kanon und Hermeneutik in Zeiten der Dekonstruktion: Was die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft gegenwärtig hermeneutisch leisten kann," in *Auf dem Weg zur Neutestamentlichen Hermeneutik: Festgabe für Oda Wischmeyer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Stefan Scholz (Tübingen: Francke, 2014), 14–68.

7 Irene Peirano, "Ille Ego qui quondam: On Authorial (An)onymity," in *The Author's Voice in Classical and Late Antiquity*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 281.

inscriptiones of the Gospels, not as real authors' names ("Mark/Matthew/Luke/John," "The Gospel of Jesus Christ") but as reference-names ("The Gospel according to [*katá*] Mark," etc.),⁸ or, on the other hand, at the outset of the greeting formula of the Pauline letters, as the sender's name ("*Paũlos apóstolos*," etc., in Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1 [Timothy as co-author]; Col 1:1 [Timothy as co-author]; 1 Thess 1:1 [Silvanus and Timothy as co-authors]; 2 Thess 1:1 [Silvanus and Timothy as co-authors]; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1; Phlm 1 [Timothy as co-author]). Sometimes Paul underlines his authorship a second time by pointing to his personal signature at the end of the letter (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17). In some of the letter manuscripts, the author's name is also confirmed by the *subscriptions* at the end of the body of the letter. As to Hebrews, only a very few late manuscripts mention Paul in the *subscription* as the author. There is no greeting formula at the outset of Hebrews, and accordingly there is no naming of an author either. Historical-critical analysis has come to the conclusion that Paul's letters are the oldest documents within the collection of New Testament texts. However, in modern scholarship, the authenticity of at least seven of the 14 canonical letters of Paul is challenged. Nevertheless, scholars agree that Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon were written by Paul himself between about 50 and 65 AD.⁹

Although the author's name is absent in the Acts of the Apostles, the book of Acts clearly introduces itself as written by the author of Luke's Gospel. The name of Luke, however, is to be found neither in the Gospel nor in Acts but only handed down by early Christian tradition and by the (later) *inscriptions*.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Gospel of Luke and Acts are evidently authored books, since the author shows his person – his literary *ego* – in the prolegomena (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1). We can only speculate about the reason for "Luke's" writing anonymously. Maybe the reason was that the author initially

8 Martin Hengel, *Die Evangelienüberschriften*, SHAW.PH (Heidelberg: Winter, 1984); see also Jochen Flebbe, in this volume, 45–46.

9 It remains an open question as to why the author of Acts does not mention Paul's letter-writing activities. The picture Luke offers of Paul represents Paul as an *orator*, not as an author. In contrast, Paul himself understands his letter-writing as an act of authorship. The same applies for his addressees: They admire Paul as a letter-writer, which includes his skills as an author (2 Cor 10:10). Likewise, not only Paul himself downplays his rhetorical skills (cf. 1 Cor 1:1–5), but also his congregations do not estimate him as an *orator* (2 Cor 10:10). See Oda Wischmeyer, "Paulus als Autor," in *Von Ben Sira zu Paulus: Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Texten, Theologie und Hermeneutik des Frühjudentums und des Neuen Testaments*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, WUNT 1/173 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 298–307.

10 Cf. Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 143–144.

wrote his work for a group of communities to which he was affiliated, so that there was no need to tell his name. The same may be true for the Gospel according to John and for its anonymous author, especially when we read 1 John as a commentary on the Gospel, written by the same author for a specific group of communities. At the beginning of the letter, the author refers to the Gospel, thereby creating another twofold corpus that was clearly addressing a specific community. Neither the Gospel of Mark nor the Gospel of Matthew was originally orthonymous. It is most likely that the authors did not regard themselves as literary authors like “Luke” and “John” (John 21:24–25) but were in the first line of witnesses who handed down Jesus-traditions and acted as secretaries of the good message, the *euaggélion*.

The corpus of the apostolic letters is constituted by the 14 Pauline letters previously mentioned and by the seven so-called Catholic Letters, which, according to the manuscripts, were authored by James, Peter, John and Judas. James and Judas are regarded as brothers of Jesus, although neither of them introduces himself this way. The epistles of John are regarded as having been written by the author of the Gospel of John, although the first letter is anonymous and the second and third letter remain disputed. The Epistle of James is the only letter in the “Catholic” corpus that not only has the name, but also the genre, in the *inscriptio*: IAKOBOU EPISTOLE.

Finally, Revelation is authored by a prophet who introduces himself as “John, servant of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:1). This particular ascription was heavily disputed during the first centuries and still remains one of the open issues of the “Introduction into the New Testament.”¹¹ Several primary questions arise: Is John an independent person, one of the early Christian prophets, whose name happened to be John? In this case, his work is the second orthonymous document within the New Testament canon. Or is he the author who wrote the Fourth Gospel and (or) the Johannine letters? Who else could this author be? Should we think of John the Zebedee? I leave this question undiscussed at this point.

The discussion about authorship, i.e., about authentic reliability, viz., authority, was continued in the ancient Church for roughly three centuries. Not only Origen but also Eusebius and other Church Fathers drew some of the traditional ascriptions into question. It was only after the middle of the fourth century (367 AD) that Athanasius of Alexandria published a complete list of the canonical New Testament writings, that is, the list of those texts whose authorship was acknowledged as apostolic or as deutero-apostolic.

11 See also Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 131–132.

What is the outcome of this brief historical investigation? At first glance, we cannot detect real problems with the phenomenon of authorship in New Testament times. The texts as we read them within the canonical collection of the “New Testament” have authors, due to the historical situation of their origin. The first Christ-confessors did not live in the mythical twilights of pre-historic times but in the bright light of the history of the early Roman Empire, as we see not only in Luke (cf. Luke 1:5; 2:1; 3:1) but already in Paul’s letters (cf. 2 Cor 11:32; Rom 13:1–7). The earliest communities grew and spread over the Roman Empire. According to Luke, earliest Christianity was not situated in a hidden corner or a self-imposed exile (cf. Acts 26:26). Rather, the opposite was the case: the communities were founded and flourished in the most vibrant cities of the eastern empire and in Rome. They were already noted by the Roman authorities since the forties (cf. Acts 11:26) and underwent the first instances of persecution under Nero.¹² But this is only one side of the coin. Reliable historical transmission of the first decades of the earliest Christian communities and their leaders is not very strong. Already the Christian authors of the second century AD questioned the historicity of some aspects of their tradition. The authenticity of some of the earliest documents was disputed, and the patristic theologians asked for more historical evidence, since the line of trustworthy and historically reliable tradition was considered uncertain. The attributing of texts to particular authors was a matter of authorization and thereby a necessity. Some of the texts of the canonical collection have always been disputed and also remained controversial even after Athanasius: Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude and Revelation. To summarize, the great importance of the relationship between author and authorization is most clearly demonstrated by Paul, the only historical author within the New Testament collection of texts whom we can identify for certain and who always argues by both his name *and* his apostleship.

Ironically, most of the New Testament texts lack the confirmation of distinct authorship, in the historical sense of an authentic document, as demanded by the Church Fathers. As far as we know, the Gospels were written anonymously, and a majority of the letters received pseudepigraphic author-ascriptions. And this is not only true for the so-called apostolic letters but highly probable also for half of the Pauline letters, including Colossians and 2 Thessalonians – indeed, those writings in which the closing formulae point to Paul’s own signature.¹³

12 Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Geschichte des Urchristentums: Ein Lehrbuch*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2014), 26.

13 See the collection of essays: Jörg Frey et al., eds., *Pseudepigraphie und Verfasserfiktion in frühchristlichen Briefen*, WUNT 1/246 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); for a discussion of

It is exactly this lack of historical evidence and reliable tradition about the authors that since Papias has fired the dispute over the authorship of the earliest Christian texts. What we observe so far is that, on the one hand, there is an ongoing gap between the Church Fathers' search for historically approved authors and, on the other, the habit of the earliest authors writing for the most part anonymously or – in the case of the Gospels – under a pseudepigraphic label of borrowed authority. The Gospel authors seem to have relied on the authority of the Gospel itself, that is, on the message of Jesus, so that they had no need to write under their own names even if they actually acted as literary authors. Paul wrote letters on current issues and therefore addressed his communities under his own name but at the same time emphasized his status as apostle, which guaranteed his authority. The other letter writers used the authority of one of the apostles, be it that of Paul or of one of Jesus' disciples.

The historical perspective demonstrates a variety of possibilities regarding how early Christian texts were authored. At the same time, we observe the importance of the question about authorship as a question about historical authors in the earliest Christian literature and about the particular concern for the names and for the status of the authors. This concern is not only caused by modern historicism but originated already in the second century as a question about the authority of the founding traditions of the growing early Christian movement. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between several approaches to the question about the New Testament authors:

- the prime question about the authorial voice of the "apostles,"
- the question about the historical reliability of the tradition since the second century AD,
- the critical approach towards the early Christian tradition since the advent of humanism,
- the radical critique since Ferdinand Christian Baur,
- the current post-historicist perspective.

In what follows I will discuss why this quest remains indispensable for New Testament scholarship, even after the poststructuralist turn, and in which way the historical problem of "Who wrote the New Testament texts?" is compatible and interrelated with the current issues of the texts' own perspectives.

Paul's signature see also Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 139–144, and Gregory Peter Fewster, in this volume, 163.

2 Text versus Author and Vice Versa

Since Barthes and Foucault, the text has been set free and has become an entity of its own. I leave undecided whether and in which way exegetes can follow Barthes' opinion on the author, but I confess that in my view the phrase "the death of the author" is an ingenious metaphor that unfortunately has decayed to a mere buzzword over the last generation.¹⁴ In contrast, as a result of the groundbreaking theoretical approaches of Barthes, Foucault and other scholars, in current scholarship the *text* rightly maintains its own independent status. In other words, the *author* has not died since Barthes proclaimed and celebrated his death, but the significance of the *text* has flourished since Barthes' bold advance. Scholars from different fields have engaged in debates on the author since Barthes and Foucault. In recent years, literary scholars have "reinvented" the author.¹⁵ The *author* – as an interpretive figure – still remains crucial to New Testament studies, but we have to deliberate carefully what kind of authorship we are talking about when we discuss the authors of New Testament texts in context of the poststructuralist debate. It is crucial that the texts of the New Testament are produced by historical persons. It is not the texts themselves that produce other texts (this would mean misreading Julia Kristeva!),¹⁶ and we should not think of God as the author of the New Testament texts either¹⁷ – although this position was adopted by certain theologians up until our time.¹⁸ But the fact that there is still an option for "God as author" of the Bible¹⁹ shows clearly how important the whole issue of historical authorship remains for the interpretation of Biblical texts, and especially of the New Testament. The role of the *text*, however, must also be redefined,

14 See the contributions in the article "Autor" by James A. Loader, Oda Wischmeyer, Ulrich H. J. Körtner, Sigmar Döpp and Christine Lubkoll, in *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013), 60–63.

15 Fotis Jannidis et al., eds., *Rückkehr des Autors: Zur Erneuerung eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur 71 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999); Fotis Jannidis et al., eds., *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000); Heinrich Detering, ed., *Autorschaft: Positionen und Revisionen: DFG-Symposium 2001*, Germanistische-Symposien-Berichtsbände 24 (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2002).

16 See also Peter Clar's interpretation of Julia Kristeva in this volume, 58–64.

17 Cf. Jochen Flebbe's contribution to this volume, in which he reflects on the possibility of finding God's words in a text written by human authors.

18 See the article of Ulrich H. J. Körtner, "Autor 3: Systematisch-Theologisch," in *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013), 61–62. Körtner points especially to Johann G. Hamann.

19 Cf. Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor: Zu einer Poietologischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

especially in regard to the phenomena of anonymous texts and of open or hidden pseudepigraphy.

We can address this issue by asking two related questions. First, to what extent do we need the text for molding an *author*? Or, is not the *author* alone enough? And second, to what extent does the *text* need an author in order to be successfully interpreted? Or, is not the *text* alone enough? To anticipate both responses: No, neither the text nor the author can be understood as independent but rather both are related. My aim is to demonstrate the kind of connections between both subjects in regard to the texts of the New Testament.

First, the *author*. It is necessary to point out that an author is defined by the texts he produces. It does not make sense to speak of an author at all without referring to the texts he produces. Interestingly enough, this is true also for persons who would not identify themselves as authors. As I already mentioned, within the collection of texts that later became the New Testament, there is no better example to be found for this author-text relation than Paul and his epistles. Paul presents himself as “apostle and servant of Jesus Christ”; he does not present himself as author. Although he was only one of a number of leading religious figures of his time, he was nevertheless the first author of the Christ-confessing communities of the first century AD, thanks to the letters he addressed to both communities and individuals. Scholars agree that these letters are more than mere vehicles of information but products of substantial epistolary and rhetorical quality. In other words, the letters qualify Paul as an author even if he himself would not have been aware of that or would not have liked to be labeled in that way.

Second, the *text*. By contrast, it certainly does make sense to speak about texts without mentioning their authors. As I said, texts necessarily have authors, but many texts still exist without any tradition about the authors who produced them. Authors die, but texts may – be it by chance or by intention – survive. This applies to many documents of different literary genres, especially from antiquity, but also from the medieval and even from early modern times, and it applies to most of the New Testament texts, as I have briefly demonstrated. Philology and literary analysis, that is, analysis of the language, structure, genre, rhetoric, narrative and argument of a text, can be conducted without any knowledge of its author. Also, the content and the message of a text are independent of the quest for the author. But that is not the final word.

There remains a third aspect, namely, the *author* behind the *text* or in the text. It is a matter of fact that scholars always feel unhappy with the situation of an “unknown” author or of doubtful authorship.²⁰ It is sufficient to remind

²⁰ See Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 138.

us of the quest for Shakespeare. The reference to William Shakespeare explains that classical poetical, philosophical, religious or political texts always exist in relation to the persons who produced them. Shakespeare's works can be understood and interpreted without any biographical and historic knowledge of their author, but nevertheless scholarship again and again attempts to explore the man or even the woman behind the texts.²¹ Let me mention just two more famous examples. The author cannot prescribe how his or her text should be *interpreted* – but perhaps he provides the interpreters with information about the process of *production*, as did Thomas Mann with his “Die Entstehung des Dr. Faustus” (1949). The author's own experiences are in some way a starting point for his literary or intellectual work. That applies to Goethe's encounter with a young woman who was executed in 1772 because of infanticide. This incident was one of the starting points for *Faust 1*. We can read *Faust* and “Dr. Faustus” without knowing about these biographical and bibliographical backgrounds, but our reading will be more comprehensive and thorough when we learn about the authors' experiences and thoughts behind (or before) the texts and their transformations within the text.

3 Text and Author in the Letter of James

Scholars are particularly keen to know the authors of ancient texts, as can be demonstrated by the reception history of the Letter of James. Although the interest in the question about the author of this early Christian text – it has been labeled by some scholars as an early Jewish document (Louis Massebieu)²² – has changed over the centuries, the dispute has yet to be settled, as a quick glance at recent commentaries shows. Up until now, some of the commentators vote for James, the brother of Jesus, as author, while other scholars hypothesize an unknown author of the second or third generation of the Christian movement.²³ But what is the dispute about? Is it important to know whether

21 See also Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Noonday Press, 1975), 27: “As an institution, the author is dead [...] but in the text, in a way, I desire the author: I need his figure” (Peirano, “*Ille ego qui quondam*,” 251).

22 Louis Massebieu, “L'Épître de Jacques: Est-elle l'Œuvre d'un Chrétien?” *RHR* 32 (1895): 249–283.

23 Martin Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 12th ed., KEK 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 23–35; Hubert Frankemölle, *Der Brief des Jakobus: Kapitel 1*, ÖTK 17/1 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), 45–54; Christoph Burchard, *Der Jakobusbrief*, HNT 15/1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 3–6; Wiard Popkes, *Der Brief des Jakobus*. THKNT 14 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 64–68; Luke T. Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37A (New Haven, CT and

the letter was written by Jesus' brother or by a pseudonymous or pseudepigraphic author? In which way would an answer change our understanding of the text?

If we argue along the line of *historical investigation*, we will necessarily answer that it is absolutely important to investigate whether the Letter of James is a document that was authored by James, the brother of Jesus (Johannes Eduard Huther, Willibald Beyschlag²⁴ and many commentators up to Scot McKnight), or not. What would be the outcome of this investigation? Three points are of particular importance. First, Jesus' teachings were proclaimed orally. The letter would add profound historic knowledge on the education and theology of the family of Jesus and on Jesus' own literary and religious erudition (Roland Deines).²⁵ Second, a document authored by James would also provide insights into the early setting of the Christ-confessing community in Jerusalem around 40 AD. The topics of temptation and of persecution, of the social status of rich members of the community and of social responsibility for the poor – to mention just a few aspects – would correlate to the historical picture Luke gives at the beginning of Acts. The Letter of James would serve as a way of confirming Luke's historical scenario of the *Urgemeinde*. Third, a letter of Jesus' brother would have the highest level of authority among the New Testament writings, both in regard to the age of the document and to the person who authored it.²⁶ In other words, in this perspective, the historical and the theological status of

London: Yale University Press, 2005), 89–123 (esp. 108–111: "Theories of Authorship"); Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2011), 13–38; Dale C. Allison, *James: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, ICC (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 3–32.

- 24 For Huther and Beyschlag and their successor Martin Dibelius, see Oda Wischmeyer, "Der Jakobusbrief," in *Der "Kritisch-exegetische Kommentar" in seiner Geschichte: H. A. W. Meyers KEK von seiner Gründung 1829 bis heute*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, Friedrich W. Horn and Dietrich-Alex Koch, KEK Sonderband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2018), 436–453.

Representative for Beyschlag's position, see Willibald Beyschlag, *Kritisch-Exegetisches Handbuch über den Brief des Jacobus*, 6th ed., KEK 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1898), 40: "After all this, nothing stands against submitting to the joy shared by Herder and ridiculed as 'childlike' by modern critics that we have in our canon an autographic letter by a biological brother of Jesus." Translation C. B.; German original: "Nach alledem steht allerdings nichts im Wege, sich der von Herder getheilten, von der modernen Kritik als 'kindlich' verspotteten Freude hinzugeben, dass wir einen eigenhändigen Brief eines leiblichen Bruders Jesu in unserm Kanon haben."

- 25 This is the line along which Roland Deines argues in his recent monograph: *Jakobus: Im Schatten des Größeren*. Biblische Gestalten 30 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt), 2017.
- 26 The commentary of Willibald Beyschlag follows this line (see Wischmeyer, "Der Jakobusbrief").

the text depend on its *authorship*, not on its content! Both aspects, history and authority, are intertwined, as I have pointed out before.

If we choose a different approach by arguing along the line of *textual interpretation* and of *reception history*, we will reach a different result. First, I have already pointed to the fact that the evidence from reception history is weak: We do not have any reference to the Letter of James before Origen. The letter remained disputed even after Athanasius' decision. There is no reasonable explanation for the weak history of tradition of such an outstanding document (*contra* Roland Deines).²⁷ Second, the letter does not refer to Jesus but only (very seldom) to Jesus Christ as Lord. It is hard to explain why James should not have referred to his brother's teaching as the Gospel authors did. Third, the moral teachings that are transmitted in the Letter of James have much material in common with early Jewish and early imperial ethical advice or *parenesis* (Martin Dibelius).²⁸ The kind of interpretation of these materials would not change if we should think of James, the brother of Jesus, instead of an anonymous person of the third generation without an individualized profile.²⁹ Fourth, such an anonymous document would show the common early Christian ethical concerns. That the author strives for authority is already clear from James 1:1. The unknown author uses the literary tool of *prosopopoiia*³⁰ by pretending to write under the historical or theological authority of Jesus' brother.

Current scholarship maintains both positions. Both scenarios are reasonable in certain respects³¹ and demonstrate that the question about the *author* matters for the interpretation of the *text* and for its *authority*.

27 Roland Deines argues that the sayings source Q was also lost in the turmoil of the expulsion of the Christ-confessing community from Jerusalem after 62 AD. See Koch, *Geschichte*, 380–385.

28 Dibelius, *Jakobus*, 13–23; Wiard Popkes, *Paränese und Neues Testament*, SBS 168 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996).

29 Popkes, *Paränese*, 35: "The writer thus rightly remains to us a stranger among many, more of a witness than a creator." Translation C. B.; German original: "So bleibt der Verf. für uns mit Recht ein Unbekannter unter den Vielen, mehr Zeuge als Gestalter."

30 Peter Clar refers to Paul de Man's concept of *prosopopeia*, in this volume, 61, 64.

31 Johnson, *James*, 121, comes to a different conclusion, preferring James, the brother of Jesus, as author, but with caution: "The arguments do tend strongly towards the conclusion that James is a very early writing from a Palestinian Jewish Christian source. And James the brother of the Lord is a reasonable candidate." Johnson, however, underlines that there is no proof available for this hypothesis.

4 Intentions? Analyze Them, Discuss Them, Then Take Them or Leave Them

So far, I have argued that *texts* have authors, and that *authors* write texts, and that authors matter for the *interpretation* of texts. In other words, the quest for the author matters for thoughtful *readers*, even if the memory of the author has been lost, and it is part of the scholar's approach to texts to attempt to reconstruct the authors who produced these texts. I have further argued that texts can be interpreted without distinct knowledge about their authors but that authors cannot be imagined without the texts they produced.

Now I will go one step further. I will argue that developed and rich literary, philosophical or scholarly texts also have *intentions*. This is true independent of whether the texts in question belong to the dramatic, poetical, narrative, rhetorical-argumentative or learn-theoretical genre. And I will argue that we should think *beyond* the author-text-intention distinction. We are accustomed to distinguishing between the *intentio auctoris* and the *intentio operis*.³² I am not content with this either-or distinction because *texts* themselves do have *intentions*, intentions which are put into them by their *authors*.³³ These intentions may affect only the person of the author or the intended or even the not yet-intended audience. Texts can be written with the idea of speaking only to the author in the sense of a self-talk or soliloquy or monologue. Such texts are meant as steps on the long road of the search for the author's self, and their intention is some kind of self-discovery by means of writing. The text becomes the *alter ego* or the closest friend of the author.³⁴ One of the best-known examples of this kind of exclusively self-directed intention of an authored text is Fernando Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet* (*Livro Do Desassossego*). Diaries are the preferred literary genre of this kind of *intentio auctoris*. Other texts have clear intentions towards a personally known audience – this is often the case within the literary activities of Roman authors of the Golden and Silver Age, which were produced within and for a small circle of people who knew each other – or towards an broader intended readership, openly expressed, often in a preface, or hidden behind literary strategies that nevertheless are intended to be understood by the readers. We will find the *intentio operis* or the *intentio auctoris* when we investigate the literary genre, which works as a main tool

32 See the contributions in the article "Autorenintention" by Heinrich Utschneider, Siegmär Döpp, Carlos Spoerhase and Jörg Meibauer, in *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013), 63–66.

33 See also Jochen Flebbe, in this volume, 46–48.

34 See Sandra Heinen's reference to Wayne Booth's definition of the "implied author" as the author's "second self" in this volume, 11.

for communicating the *author's* intention and is at the same time a basic part of the *text*. Texts are written with the intention of informing or educating, of persuading or comforting, of terrifying or upsetting, of delighting or simply entertaining their intended audience (*delectare aut prodesse*: Horace on poetry). So the choice of the genre is part of the *intentio auctoris*. Finally, texts can be mere declarations that anticipate solely a future audience or that intend to establish a readership that does not yet exist. I cannot go into further detail here. What I want to demonstrate is that the intention is one important and necessary element within the complex relation between author, text and intended or unintended reader.

Scholarly text analysis has produced many methodological instruments for discovering the – often hidden – *intentions* an author has incorporated into his or her text. It is one of the greatest challenges and highest delights of philology and literary criticism to detect these intentions and to thereby enter into a conversation with an author whom – at least when we are dealing with texts from the past – we will never meet personally. Authors are persons, as I underscored above, and in understanding their intentions by reading their texts, we meet human beings – contemporaries or persons who died long ago; these encounters with authors are one of the prime benefits of the humanities. It is also a privilege unique to humankind to remember and to reflect on persons from the past by investigating their biographical settings and working conditions and by honoring their memory.³⁵ The quest for the author and his or her intention is also part of the memory of him or her, as was impressively demonstrated in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's monograph *In Memory of Her*.³⁶

Readers – and here I only very briefly touch on one of the most relevant terms or concepts of contemporary interpretation theory³⁷ – can react in different ways to the authors' *intentions* which they encounter. They are free to

35 The collection of essays on the authors of the "Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament" provides rich examples of the impact of the scholars' biographies on the commentaries. In particular, the essay by Eve-Marie Becker, "Die Person des Kommentators als wissenschaftliche Persona: Zur Beschreibung eines neuen Arbeitsfeldes," in *Der "Kritisch-exegetische Kommentar" in seiner Geschichte: H. A. W. Meyers KEK von seiner Gründung 1829 bis heute*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, Friedrich W. Horn and Dietrich-Alex Koch, KEK Sonderband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2018), 70–82.

36 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

37 See the contributions in the article "Reader-Response-Criticism" by Marianne Grohmann, Bradley H. McLean, Thomas Schmitz and Michael Sauter in *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer, (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013), 478–481. The particular case of scholars (e.g. exegetes) as readers is not part of this investigation.

agree or to disagree with authorial intentions. They can like or dislike the author's argument; they can feel delighted or bored, frustrated or disgusted by the authors' texts. And what goes beyond these possibilities, they can oppose or reject the intentions and can even bluntly decide not to read the texts further. Finally, they can physically delete the texts, for example, burn them and damn their inherited memory – and that means the end of any authorial intention. Even this behavior is a kind of reacting to an author and to his or her intention. The crude practice of destroying or especially of burning books is a sad but meaningful example of the fact that authors have intentions and that readers take them seriously in one way or the other.

I would thus like to make a plea for the combined category of the *intentio auctoris et operis*: why should we read a text when we are not interested in its *authorial* intention and at least partly convinced that we are able to find it *in* the text? To strive to uncover the authorial intention is no less than a sign that we hold the author and his dignity in high esteem. This is even true when authorial intentions differ from our own ideas. This means looking for the author's intention that is encapsulated in a text, perhaps even an anonymous one; it means that we meet the *Other*, irregardless of what he or she says. Only afterwards can we enter into critical discourse, present our own interpretation and thereby respond to the author's statements. The quest for the *Other's* intention is an exciting intellectual task that opens up new perspectives. If we do not take up the quest, we will only hear the echo of our own voices or, like Narcissus, see our own faces in the mirror of the text (perhaps as a consequence of reader-response criticism).³⁸

Finally, we must discuss the question of the *authority* of the text, which is different from its *intention*. If we find the intention, will we agree with it or share the author's perspective? Will our reading along the lines of authorial intention lead us back into a new kind of intellectual slavery? And if we reject the authorial intention but defend the *intentio operis*, will we still be slaves of textual authorities, even though no longer bound to the author's authority? Such questions have inspired postmodern philosophers' critique. However, in my view, the search for the author's intention or intentions means encountering a human being. This literary meeting does not necessarily mean accepting the intention of his or her textual heritage. Conversely, it opens up the field for meaningful conversation and critical engagement with the author. It is only through this twofold procedure of investigating the author's intention and

38 Cf. the contrary view of Michal Beth Dinkler, in this volume, 75.

arguing for or against it that we come to new insights. In the end, readers are free to take or to leave the intentions of the authors whose texts they read.³⁹

Returning to my test case for a last question: How can we detect the *author's intention* in the Letter of James if we do not have reliable information about the historical *author*? And is this kind of investigation helpful? Would it add anything new to what the *text* already tells us? More precisely, is there any reason for revealing “James” intentions when we have to confess that we know too little about him? I do not need to repeat my remarks on the different hypotheses concerning the author of the Letter of James. What I want to point out here is the benefit of the *question about the intention* as a tool that is especially useful for analyzing the rhetoric of an ancient document.

We have to realize that Hellenistic-Roman authors were trained at least to some degree in the rhetoric of persuasion (Aristotle). The Letter of James is part of this kind of Hellenistic moral literature employing the rhetoric of persuasion. The choice of literary genre and the rhetorical strategy used in the text derive from the author's intention. To analyze the Letter of James in light of authorial strategies helps to discern in which way and to which degree this letter is meant to fit within the Hellenistic-Roman literature of moral persuasion. Martin Dibelius thinks of the author of James as a “nobody” who collected various moral materials from early Jewish and popular philosophical ethics in order to give instruction to early Christian “nobodies.” He reads the text as nothing other than a storehouse or container of traditions. Accordingly, he does not find any traces of a pivotal *intentio auctoris* within the letter but only materials loosely connected by keywords. From this perspective, the interpretative tool of the quest for the *intentio auctoris vel operis* does not make sense. In contrast, if we read the text as part of the Hellenistic-Roman ethical literature of persuasion, written by an author who aimed at establishing early Christian moral literature within that literary and philosophical setting,⁴⁰ we obviously need an author – whether we know anything about him or not. And if we intend to enter into substantial conversation with the author of James, we will have to discuss his moral advice as one of many voices of contemporary ethics of the early Roman Empire. Perhaps we will become convinced that there is nothing to be learnt today from James, or perhaps the opposite will be true. Perhaps we will grasp the ethical concept as a whole without taking

39 Cf. A. K. M. Adam, in this volume, 203.

40 I suggest that the broader setting can be defined as that of the second Sophistic. See Beatrice Wyss et al., eds., *Sophisten in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit: Orte, Methoden und Personen der Bildungsvermittlung*. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 101 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

a particular position; perhaps we will come to the conclusion that James' moral world is based on anxiety and will therefore reject his concept – or we will judge that James' dark view on the moral conduct of humankind at least partially depicts reality. It is this kind of debate regarding the intentions of authors, of texts and of authors behind texts that we need in order to keep alive our interest in the texts we interpret.

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“And God Was the Text”: An Essay on *intentio operis* and the Bible as the Word of God

Jochen Flebbe

1 Introduction

The problem of the relation between text and author may be seen as the lynchpin in considering how biblical texts constitute God's Word. Thus, literary theory and its reflections on the essence of texts and explanations of authorship and meaning provide crucial starting points for understanding whether and how one can speak of the text of the Bible as more than mere human words but as God's Word.

1.1 *Equation of Author and Text*

We begin with a description of the problem of equating author and text. Such an equation of texts with their authors was long the dominant approach. Informed by the Romantic notion of the author as the creative genius of a text,¹ the author and his text were understood as largely identical. Accordingly, the author as creator of the text has full command over his text; he is the master of his text. Conversely, the text consists completely in the author's meaning. The content of the text is exactly what the author puts into it. The text is exactly what the author wants to say, and what he brings into the text is exactly what he wants to express.² The text is identical with the message of its creator, the author. This applies equally to the reader. The text, understood precisely as the message of the author, conveys that same message to the reader. The well-known question is: What does the author want to say with the text?³ From this

1 Hans-Peter Wagner, “Intention,” in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie: Ansätze – Personen – Grundbegriffe*, 4th ed., ed. Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart et al.: Metzler, 2008): 323.

2 For criticism of this point, see Paul Ricœur, “Philosophische und theologische Hermeneutik,” in *Metapher: Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache*, Paul Ricœur and Eberhard Jüngel, EvT.S 34 (München: Kaiser, 1974): 28, doi: 10.14315/evth-1974-sh03.

3 Additionally, see Alo Allkemper and Norbert O. Eke, *Literaturwissenschaft*, 5th ed. (Paderborn: Fink, 2014), 26; Michael Becker-Mrotzeck and Rüdiger Vogt, *Unterrichtskommunikation: Linguistische Analysemethoden und Forschungsergebnisse*, 2nd ed., Germanistische

perspective, the text opens up for the reader, insofar as it is understood as an expression and message of the author.

The question is, however, how appropriate such a description of the relations between author, text and reader really is. At least by the middle of the twentieth century, this understanding was judged as either oversimplified or as completely absurd,⁴ and it was ultimately laid to rest under the banner of the “death of the author.”⁵ Furthermore, with regard to the theological question of the Bible as God’s Word,⁶ the identification of author and text hardly offers post-Enlightenment, modern or postmodern people a way to spell out how the biblical text can be God’s Word. For if the human author as creator of his text has complete control over the text, the text is the text of that author and cannot equally be the Word of God. This model thus provides no room for a divine dimension of the text.⁷ The only way to bring the divine into play in this model would be to reckon with the inspiration of the author⁸ and thereby to understand the author as an amanuensis of God, who dictates his words. In this way, the inspiration of the author would lead to the creation of a divine, revelatory text. But, as mentioned above, such an appeal to the supernatural cannot be taken seriously in the post-Enlightenment world.⁹

A further aspect is also worth considering. Clinging to the full identity of the author’s intention and the text, one could either make a text divine by assuming God as inspirer and, as such, as the actual author of the text. Or one could reject inspiration, and the divine dimension would fade, leaving only

Arbeitshefte (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2009), 73; Ansgar Nünning, “Autor, historischer,” in *Metzler Lexikon*: 41–42; Wagner, “Intention,” 323.

4 In addition to the works listed in note 2, see Fotis Jannidis, “Autor und Interpretation,” in *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft*, ed. Fotis Jannidis et al. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000), 7–34; Joanna Bossinade, *Poststrukturalistische Literaturtheorie* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 1–10; Klaus M. Bogdal, “Einleitung: Von der Methode zur Theorie: Zum Stand der Dinge in den Literaturwissenschaften,” in *Neue Literaturtheorien: Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed., ed. Klaus M. Bogdal (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2005), 10–31; Gerhard Lauer, “Einführung: Autorkonzepte in der Literaturwissenschaft,” in *Die Rückkehr des Autors: Zur Erneuerung eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, ed. Fotis Jannidis et al., Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur 71 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2008), 159–166.

5 Roland Barthes, “La Mort de l’Auteur,” in *Manteia* (1968): 12–17.

6 On word and Scripture, see also Ricœur, “Hermeneutik,” 35.

7 See Manfred Oeming, *Biblische Hermeneutik: Eine Einführung*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), who differentiates between interpretations oriented towards the author, the text and the reader.

8 Joseph Ratzinger, Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe am Jordan bis zur Verkündigung*, Gesammelte Schriften 6/1 (Freiburg i. Brsg.: Herder, 2013), 136.

9 See also Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *Der inspirierte Leser: Zentrale Aspekte biblischer Hermeneutik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1994), 13–43.

the human author speaking of his experiences and convictions about God. But in both cases, this model is still bound up with another problematic aspect of speaking about God and revelation. In both cases, the text as precisely the message of the author constitutes either the revelation of God or the experience or conviction of God in the form of a definite, one-dimensional and literal proposition. Accordingly, one could know precise and clear information about God. A person's communication with and access to God would be one to one. God would be made fully accessible, would be fully extrapolated; he could be comprehensible in a precisely definable, singular, non-ambiguous way.¹⁰

1.2 *The Gospel of Mark*

A solution to this problem can be found by looking at the Gospels, in particular, the Gospel of Mark. If we assume that the attributions of these texts to named authors, using the *κατά* formula, are secondary,¹¹ then the Gospels originally emerged as texts without explicitly named authors. This is particularly the case for the Gospel of Mark,¹² for which, in contrast to Luke and John, there are no explicit or implicit clues to the author's identity whatsoever.¹³ Mark is thus a text that functions and works completely independently of the question of its authorship.¹⁴ In this way, the text takes on its communicative function, as well its authority, simply and completely from itself.¹⁵ Additionally, the functional and communicative autonomy of the Gospel of Mark is determined by another aspect, in that the text is titled Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("Origin/

10 On authorial intent and clarity, see Winfried Nöth, *Handbuch der Semiotik*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 420.

11 Martin Hengel, *Die Evangelienüberschriften*, SHAW.PH (Heidelberg: Winter, 1984), 14.

12 Detlev Dormeyer, *Das Markusevangelium* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 147.

13 In principle this applies to the Gospel of Matthew as well. In that case, the role of a fictive author may be evoked with the connection of the author's name Matthew with the converted tax collector in Matthew 9:9, depending on how one evaluates that connection (see Martin Ebner, "Das Matthäusevangelium," in *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 2nd ed., ed. Martin Ebner and Stefan Schreiber, Kohlhammer-Studienbücher Theologie 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013), 141–142.

14 On "Mark" as a possible cipher, see Ulrich H. J. Körtner, "Markus, der Mitarbeiter des Petrus," in *ZNW* 71 (1980): 173.

15 The anonymity of Mark's gospel is frequently underestimated in the commentaries, or at least barely analyzed. However, see the initial suggestions in Ludger Schenke, *Das Markusevangelium: Literarische Eigenart – Text und Kommentierung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 26–44; On the authority of the text as text, see also Nöth, *Handbuch*, 391.

Basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ").¹⁶ That the content or subject of the text is Jesus Christ fundamentally defines the communicative function of the text and constitutes its legitimization. When one considers that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of the Son of God,¹⁷ the text by itself and on the basis of its content takes on the quality of being God's Word.¹⁸ Here the author plays no role at all; he intentionally and programmatically remains in the background and thereby plays no role – neither in the passing down of tradition nor as an instrument. In this way, an ancient text like the Gospel of Mark already offers a solution to the problem of considering a text as authoritative revelation by means of its author, who himself would necessarily be endowed with some special quality.¹⁹

1.3 Intentio operis

This can be further developed and nuanced for understanding the biblical text as the Word of God if we can define both the autonomy of the text by means of the *intentio operis*,²⁰ as we saw with Mark, as well as the relations between author, text and reader.²¹ The concept *intentio operis* affirms the autonomy of

16 Cf. Schenke, *Markusevangelium*, 44; contra Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 196–198.

17 This is the case no matter how one solves the text-critical problem in Mark 1:1. See, e.g., Heinrich Greeven and Eberhard Güting, eds., *Textkritik des Markusevangeliums*, Theologie. Forschung und Wissenschaft 11 (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2005), 20, 41–46.

18 Accordingly, it is an additional assumption to postulate another authority behind the text, as Joachim Gnllka does. ("The anonymity of authorship is to be considered for the comprehension of the work. The withdrawal of the author, whom the addressees might have known, behind his work points to another authority. It is the authority of the Word that conveys the sermon of the church [...].") Translation C. B.; German original: "Die Anonymität der Verfasserschaft ist für das Verständnis des Werkes zu berücksichtigen. Das Zurücktreten des Autors, der den Adressaten bekannt gewesen sein dürfte, hinter das Werk verweist auf eine andere Autorität hin. Es ist die Predigt der Kirche tragende Autorität des Wortes [...].") See Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, vol. 1: *Mk 1,1–8,26*, EKKNT 1/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn and Zürich: Neukirchener and Benzinger, 1978), 32. One may not, however, identify this authority with the Church, as does Joseph Ratzinger, *papa emeritus* Benedikt XVI. Cf. Ratzinger, *Jesus*, 136–137. See further Michael Wolter, "Wo bleibt der Eigensinn der Evangelien? [review J. Ratzinger Benedikt XVI, *Jesus*]," in *Rheinischer Merkur* 21 (2007): 8.

19 Here, signs of apostolicity may also be mentioned. In Luke 1:3, some Old Latin manuscripts add *et spiritui sancto* after *καὶ μοι* (*et mihi*) in order to legitimate the text beyond its author.

20 Umberto Eco, *Die Grenzen der Interpretation* (München and Wien: Hanser: 1992), 35–39; see also Ricœur, "Hermeneutik," 39–43: "Sache des Textes."

21 See also Eco, *Grenzen*, 35–55. In connection with exegesis, see Oeming, *Hermeneutik*, 31–139; Thomas Söding, *Wege der Schriftauslegung: Methodenbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Freiburg i. Brsg.: Herder 1998), 237–248.

the text.²² It considers that the meaning of a text lies neither simply with the author nor simply with the reader. Rather, it follows the idea that every text is autonomous, both autonomous from the author, as well as autonomous from the reader. A text is not based only on the creative will of the author, and this creative will is also not completely free. The author can work creatively to a certain degree, but in working creatively with language, the author is bound to linguistic structures and mechanisms that work independently of the author himself. These structures and mechanisms are fundamental and affect the author unconsciously when he generates a text. The weightiness of such structures²³ is evident in that they have an effect on different levels, such as when one considers the syntactic, semantic (narrative) and pragmatic dimensions of a text.²⁴ But this does allow for a rough definition of the relation between author and text. The text offered by the author does not receive its meaning immediately on the basis of the intention of the author, but rather on the basis of the "independent existence" of the linguistic elements in its structures.²⁵

Accordingly, the meaning of the text arises from and is constituted by the structure of its elements and is in this way essentially autonomous. It is no accident that "text"²⁶ means "woven," "texture," "fabric,"²⁷ and when it comes to fabric, in contrast to embroidery, the weaver steps into the background behind the material and its structure. This is illustrative for the role of the author and for the autonomy of the text, insofar as the text itself receives priority in the search for meaning, not the author's intent. Further aspects are also tied to the *intentio operis* and the essential identification of the text with its structures. Due to the polysemy of individual elements of the text,²⁸ its signs and the enormous variety and complexity of their connections as a defining structural element of the fabric, a text cannot be limited to one single meaning. Rather, a

22 On the autonomy of the text, see also Ricœur, "Hermeneutik," 35–36, 39–45.

23 See further Jean Piaget, *Le Structuralisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968); Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); Jurij M. Lotmann, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*, 4th ed. (München: Fink, 1993); and in connection with exegesis, see Wilhelm Egger and Peter Wick, *Methodenlehre zum Neuen Testament: Biblische Texte selbständig auslegen*, 6th ed. Grundlagen Theologie (Freiburg i. Brsg.: Herder, 2011), 43–49.

24 Charles W. Morris, *Grundlagen der Zeichentheorie – Ästhetik und Zeichentheorie* (Frankfurt a. M. et al.: Ullstein 1979), 32–68.

25 Manfred Titzmann, *Strukturelle Textanalyse*, 3rd ed. (München: Fink, 1993).

26 On the history of the term, see Maximilian Scherner: "TEXT": Untersuchungen zur Begriffsgeschichte," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 39 (1996): 103–160.

27 On text as fabric see also Eckart Reinmuth, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2002), 91–94.

28 Nöth, *Handbuch*, 420, 460.

text is open to various meanings; it is polyvalent and offers the reader a range of meanings, understandings and interpretations. Depending on different readers, different interpretations are possible. To be sure, insofar as interpretation is understood as the generation of meaning on the basis of the *intentio operis*, that is, on the basis of the structures of the text, there exists a wide spectrum of possible interpretations,²⁹ but interpretation also has its limits.³⁰ The *intentio operis* sets these limits and thereby offers a framework for a field of possible interpretive variations. Consequently, an interpretation must always be corrected, measured and substantiated along the lines of the *intentio operis*.³¹ The connection between reader and text is such that the reader fills the signs with meaning and, within the frame of his or her preunderstanding, recognizes and interprets the text's structures.³² But, the connections made between reader and text have to be verified, corrected and changed on the basis of the text, since it stands opposite the reader and provides actual impetus for meaning.³³

Hence, the *intentio operis* can at the same time never be completely reached or fully grasped. It can only be approximated. Ultimately, the *intentio operis* as the impetus for interpretation is never realized in the reader or the author's construction of meaning. It exists on its own and thus, for the reader, only as if from afar.

1.4 *The intentio operis as Word of God*

This understanding of the sense, function and meaning of a text based on the *intentio operis* offers a way to understand biblical texts as the Word of God. Accordingly, biblical texts can be understood as texts written by humans without having to assume the involvement of supernatural verbal inspiration in their production. Insofar as the meaning of the text is not identical with the *intentio auctoris* but rather seen in the autonomy of the text, this autonomy claims for itself something beyond its human production.³⁴ This provides an entryway for the divine dimension of the text. It supplies the text with a dimension that goes beyond the human, that is, beyond the human authorship of the text. If one connects the *intentio operis* with God, that is, if one defines the *intentio operis* as the essential element of the text, as *intentio dei*, then texts authored by humans can essentially constitute a Word of God. This can, moreover, be linked with the fundamental biblical self-definition of God as Word,

29 Umberto Eco, *Das offene Kunstwerk* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), 27–59.

30 Eco, *Grenzen*, 54–55, 202–216, 440.

31 Ibid.

32 On interpretation as process, see Nöth, *Handbuch*, 420–421.

33 Eco, *Grenzen*, 49–55.

34 On the authority of the text as text, see Nöth, *Handbuch*, 391.

as we find in Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 40:8, John 1:1, Hebrews 1:1–2 and elsewhere. The distinction between *intentio auctoris* and *intentio operis* and the elevation of the *intentio operis* to the actual meaning-giving element of the text allow the determination of God as Word and herewith God's "inliteration," his becoming a text. Now, by understanding this event essentially by means of the *intentio operis*, and by conceiving of the sense, function and meaning of a text also by means of it, there arise further implications and prospects for discourse about God and for considering biblical texts as the Word of God. If it is not the *intentio auctoris* but rather the *intentio operis* that determines the meaning of biblical texts, then that also means that no one can express something about God, that no one can precisely and clearly say or know something about God. If one can only approximate the *intentio operis* but can never fully apprehend it, then one can also never fully apprehend God but only approximate the sense and meaning of the Word of God, and thereby God himself. Ultimately, being shaped by the *intentio operis*, God remains God – he cannot be fully reached, humans cannot close in on God, he is not at their disposal. In the *intentio operis*, God remains inapprehensible, beyond influence. If the *intentio operis* means that a text is polyvalent and polysemous and allows innumerable different interpretations, then discourse about God must also be polysemous and polyvalent;³⁵ there must be innumerable possible ways to understand God and to articulate his being.³⁶ God does not allow himself to be tied to one interpretation, but rather, as text, offers each person his or her own chance to understand and interpret him. At the same time, however, a framework for and limits to interpretation also exist. This means that while the understanding of God remains open and multifaceted, it is not arbitrary. The biblical God is thereby fundamentally understood from a pluralistic perspective, but discourse about God is inevitably limited by certain boundaries.³⁷ Even if understanding is a fusion of horizons,³⁸ or if meaning production really takes place in the reader, who

35 What we consider here to be an opportunity or constitutive of discourse on God is considered by Joseph Ratzinger as a danger to be warded off. See Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen* (München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 128.

36 Jochen Schmidt, *Vielstimmige Rede vom Unsagbaren: Dekonstruktion, Glaube und Kierkegaards pseudonyme Literatur*, Kierkegaard Studies 14 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2006).

37 If true and false represent a wide spectrum within certain limits, then this implies a substantial modification of Jan Assmann's thesis on monotheism and violence. See Jan Assmann, *Monotheismus und die Sprache der Gewalt* (Wien: Picus, 2009); Jan Assmann, *Mose der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur* (München and Wien: Hanser, 1998), 17–22, 47–54.

38 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975), 298–299, 365–366, 375.

fills the signs of the text with his or her own meaning, *intentio operis* maintains that regardless of this process, meaning lies not with the reader and cannot be constituted by the reader, but rather is an *extra nos* existing beyond the reader's influence. One's own understanding, one's own meaning construction, always has to be checked by the external, provided text. Understanding should constantly be corrected by means of its counterpart, the text. The counterpart remains the originating impulse of meaning. By the same token, under the auspices of *intentio operis*, the fusion of horizons and the role of the reader in the construction of meaning produce the possibility of connecting God and humans. If the human person fills signs with the meaning he gives them, then God can be understood in terms of space, a space filled with the biography of the person who is seeking meaning. Understanding as the fusion of horizons opens up room for the mystical dimension of religion, which indeed often finds its starting point in linguistic elements.

1.5 *The Inspired Reader*

In considering the *intentio operis* as an entryway for the *intentio dei*, the idea of inspiration as the inspiration of the reader remains intact.³⁹ This is because a text written by humans and originating out of a purely historical situation becomes a holy text not through its production but through its reception. That is to say, a text becomes holy when the reader attributes to the text sacred significance, the significance of the Word of God or a significance that for the reader is in some special way ultimate, paradigmatic or existentially meaningful.⁴⁰ This attribution can be conceived of as inspiration, as the work of the Spirit. It is possible that the idea of the *intentio operis* could even help to describe this phenomenon, if the dimension of the text that goes beyond itself, according to the conception of the *intentio operis* developed above, is described as a dimension that goes beyond human control. The inspired reader sees the *intentio dei* through the lens of the *intentio operis*, and he equates them. It should be pointed out, however, that this conception by no means has to lead to a literal

39 Körtner, *Der inspirierte Leser*: Inspiration on the part of the reader still remains open when the *intentio operis* is seen as an entryway for the *intentio dei*. It is the inspired reader who determines whether each individual text in the Bible is holy, God's Word or existentially important. That is, the reader decides whether the *intentio operis* is to be equated with the *intentio dei*. Thus, difficult Bible passages do not necessarily have to be automatically or immediately considered revelatory. At the same time, the *intentio operis* can still suggest that a text can offer something more than if κατὰ σαρκά.

40 On the role of the reader see Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, 2nd ed. (München: Fink, 1984); Umberto Eco, *Lector in Fabula* (München and Wien: dtv, 1987).

understanding of the Bible, which itself would have catastrophic consequences. Even under the *intentio operis*, there can be texts that should be understood not literally but figuratively.⁴¹

2 Conclusion and Prospects

It appears that a theological interpretation of the sense, function and meaning of texts by means of the *intentio operis* is perhaps more fruitful and theologically appropriate than a "poststructural,"⁴² "postmodern" approach.⁴³ To put it generally and polemically, if it comes down to a varied and arbitrary dance of signs, to "free-floating types of readings,"⁴⁴ if it comes down only to the impact of a text or to what is possible in the recipients and to the reception of texts, without setting limits and criteria, then the identification of God with the text would involve considerable dangers. Conversely, the bonding of *intentio operis* and *intentio dei* makes it possible, on the one hand, to avoid a human discourse on God that subjects God to human apprehension and, on the other hand, to avoid a forced distinction between true and false. Yet this approach can also set limits which identify interpretive abuses as such.

When a deconstructive method of reading deconstructs structures, limits, binary codes, etc., and seeks to break them up and call them into question, it actually at the same time presumes those very structures. Without them, such a way of reading would be impossible and would lack foundation. In this way, deconstruction is itself a warrant for *intentio operis*, which takes precisely such structures as its object. One could say deconstruction even anticipates this warrant for *intentio operis*.

This, however, predicates also the legitimacy and necessity of deconstruction. That is because God is always involved in the dissolution of boundaries

41 Consider also indications that some miracle stories in the Gospels are intended to be understood beyond their literal meaning. For example in Mark 2:1–12, the state of being paralyzed involves also a figurative dimension, as is the case with muteness in Mark 9 and blindness in Mark 8:22–26 and 10:46–52. Cf. also the discussion on the literary aspects of the military application of Cherem. See Walter Dietrich, "Achans Diebstahl (Jos 7): Eine Kriminalgeschichte aus frühpersischer Zeit," in *Die Samuelbücher im Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk: Studien zu den Geschichtsüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments* 2, ed. Walter Dietrich, BWAT 201 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 36–47, particularly 37, 46.

42 Bossinade, *Literarturtheorie*; Nöth, *Handbuch*, 49, 55; Hanjo Berressem, "Poststrukturalismus," in *Metzler Lexikon*, 591–592; Ruth Mayer, "Postmodern/Postmodernismus," in *Metzler Lexikon*, 588–591.

43 Eco, *Grenzen*, 54 and *passim*.

44 Berressem, "Poststrukturalismus," 592.

and codings (Amos 9:7; 1 Cor 15:28) and in the challenging of human structures (Hos 11:9 and passim) and binaries (Gal 3:28 and passim). Deconstruction is in this way a necessary complement to *intentio operis*. But the identification of God and text is only possible theologically and is only done responsibly if this identification is undertaken through *intentio operis* and at the same time questioned deconstructively.

Moreover, a postmodern understanding of texts can entail other potentially theological elements. A considerable theological aspect is implied by saying that texts can only be understood through their impact, that texts exist and can be described only in terms of their reception. This perspective points to the tentative thesis that God can only be understood through his impact on humans, in the reception of human beings.

The phenomenon of intertextuality offers perhaps even greater potential for theological understanding.⁴⁵ Such is the case when it comes to connections between texts, that is, when parts of texts are considered not simply as individual parts but as parts of a larger, universal text.⁴⁶ Potential for theological understanding is found when one places oneself inside the text, when one writes oneself into a text, when the reception and production of a text become the same, coincide and become part of the one universal text and melt into universal textuality. In this way, justification by faith, for example, could be understood as a fragment of my life being written into, becoming part of the meaningful divine text, whereby fulfillment could be understood as the melting of my own text into the universal text.

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45 Julia Kristeva, "Bachtin, das Wort, der Dialog und der Roman," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik: Ergebnisse und Perspektiven*, vol. 3: *Zur linguistischen Basis der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Jens Ihwe (Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum, 1972), 345–375.

46 See Peter Clar's remarks on Julia Kristeva in this volume.

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Authorship and/as Intertext – Julia Kristeva and Paul de Man

Peter Clar

1 Julia Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality

1.1 *Subverting Binary Oppositions*

In debates about the theorization of authorship, Julia Kristeva is often mentioned in connection with “feminine writing” (*écriture féminine*) and thus with Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. This label has often been problematized and so have the differences between the theories of the three scholars mentioned, as well as those of various other scholars and philosophers who are often subsumed under the popular but vague term “feminist.”

Anna Babka, for example, shows how these attempts differ significantly,¹ especially between Kristeva, on the one hand and, on the other, Cixous and Irigaray, who both find their own specific ways to define but moreover to *do* what they call “feminine writing.” The former “does not believe in a theory of femininity, but rather in a theory of subversion, of marginal groups, of dissidence [...] which is realized in the new, revolutionary language [...] of avant-garde literature.”²

Kristeva's ideas emanate from the elusiveness of the feminine (and the masculine). She therefore rejects “concepts such as the *écriture féminine* (Cixous) and the *parler femme* (Irigaray)”³ and Elfriede Jelinek's work. Babka proposes the concept of an “allo-écriture (féminine),” which could be defined as a reconceptualization of the former concept that is now characterized by putting the

1 Anna Babka, “Feministische Literaturtheorien,” in *Einführung in die Literaturtheorie*, ed. Martin Sexl (Wien: WUV, 2004), 191–222; see also Anna Babka, “Frauen.Schreiben – Jelinek. Lesen: Aspekte einer allo-écriture (féminine) in Texten Elfriede Jelineks (nach Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray und Julia Kristeva),” in *Frauen.Schreiben*, ed. Liu Wei and Julian Müller, Österreichische Literatur in China 2 (Wien: Präsenz, 2014), 15–50.

2 Babka, “Literaturtheorien,” 205. My translation; German original: “Eher als an eine Theorie der Weiblichkeit glaubt Kristeva jedoch an eine Theorie der Subversion, der Randgruppen, der Dissidenz [...], die sich in der neue[n], revolutionäre[n] Zeichenpraxis [...] der Avantgardeliteratur realisiert.”

3 Babka, “Frauen.Schreiben,” 42. My translation; German original: “[...] Konzepte wie die der *écriture féminine* (Cixous) und des *parler femme* (Irigaray) [...]”

term *féminine* into brackets, or the more radical option of “other” (*allo*), which is nonetheless still closely connected to the concepts of *écriture féminine*. This specific move addresses *écriture féminine*’s tendencies to re-produce or remain within the logic of gender difference and tries instead to deconstruct the feminine/masculine opposition in general.

In the same way, I will question and undermine binary oppositions with respect to Kristeva’s understanding of authorship and gender. However, I will reach these conclusions without further stressing either her explanations regarding “feminine writing” or her concept of “abject,” although the latter can be regarded as close to deconstructive movement of thoughts. Kristeva defines the abject as the opposite of the subject but

not in the sense of an object that presents a counterpart as the other, weaker side of a pair of opposites, an external edge, a constitutive exterior which assures the subject of itself within a “fragile texture of a desire for meaning” but, on the contrary – the abject is radically excluded “and draws me towards the place, where meaning collapses,” disturbs identity, systems and orders, disregards borders, positions, rules. It is the “in-between; the ambiguous; the composite.”⁴

Instead, I would like to write about another famous concept of Kristeva’s, that of intertextuality, to examine it in terms of its impact on the author’s position, before merging it with deconstruction as conceptualized by Paul de Man. His theoretical approach subverts binary oppositions, and thus hierarchies, such as author (especially the concept of the genius, the godlike creator, who of course is masculine)/reader, man/woman, good/evil, before/after, etc.

The way in which the aspect of gender has played or will play a role in my paper⁵ – although only on the margins, virtually as a by-product of the dissolution of binary oppositions in general – is therefore one that opposes the

4 Babka, “Frauen.Schreiben,” 45. My translation; German original: “Dies jedoch nicht in dem Sinne, wie ein Objekt ein Gegenüber darstellt, als die andere Seite des Oppositionspaares, als äußerer Rand, als konstitutives Außen, dass das Subjekt seiner selbst versichert innerhalb einer ‘fragile texture of a desire for meaning,’ sondern, im Gegenteil – das Abjekt ist radikal ausgeschlossen ‘and draws me towards the place where meaning collapses.’ Das Abjekt stört, verstört Identität, Systeme und Ordnungen, es respektiert keine Grenzen, Positionen, Regeln. Es ist das ‘in-between; the ambiguous; the composite.’” Babka quotes from Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1–2, 4.

5 These introductory words seem to precede the text, although they were written *a posteriori*; these introductory words are simultaneously prior and subsequent to the text. Additionally, to subsequently constitute this introduction, the knowledge of its precedence is necessary,

concept of “feminine writing.” Deconstruction does not seek to simply replace one concept by another or to merely reverse the hierarchy within binary oppositions. Instead, the strategy of deconstructive theories – including, for instance, Judith Butler’s gender-theory – is essentially

the strategy of the “double gesture.” [...] The first part of the strategic double is relatively easy to comprehend, since it aims at the reversal (*renversement*) of the binary oppositions. The second part is more difficult but lies in the logical transformation of the first. Now it is essential to question the basis of the opposition. To this end, the distance between the reversed opposition and the arrival of a new concept, which can no longer be included within the borders of the previous constellation, should be highlighted. The objective is to exceed and positively shift (*déplacement positif*) the given framework.⁶

1.2 *Intertextuality and Authorship*

Kristeva first develops her concept of intertextuality – a term which she later replaces “with the term transposition, which has the advantage to generally denote the ‘transition from one character-system to another’”⁷ – in “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” thereby extending Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogical character of a word or statement to the dialogical character of texts in general: “My concept of intertextuality thus goes back to Bakhtin’s dialogism and Barthes’ text theory. At that time, I contributed by replacing Bakhtin’s ideas of several voices inside an utterance with the notion of several texts within a text.”⁸

which is of course already part of my argument; antecedence and subsequence are mutually dependent.

6 Johanna Bossinade, *Poststrukturalistische Literaturtheorie* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 178. My translation; German original: “Es ist die Strategie der ‘doppelten Geste.’ [...] Der erste Teil des strategischen Doppels ist relativ leicht zu fassen, da er auf die Umkehrung (*renversement*) der zweiwertigen Oppositionen zielt. Der zweite Teil ist schwieriger, liegt aber in der logischen Veränderung des ersten. Jetzt kommt es darauf an, die Grundlage der Opposition anzutasten. Hierzu soll der Abstand zwischen der umgedrehten Opposition und der Heraufkunft eines neuen, in den Grenzen der vorigen Konstellation nicht mehr einschließbaren Konzepts markiert werden. Das Ziel ist die Überschreitung und positive Verschiebung (*déplacement positif*) des gegebenen Rahmens.”

7 Frauke Berndt and Lily Tonger-Erk, *Intertextualität: Eine Einführung*, Grundlagen der Germanistik 53 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2013), 40. My translation; German original: “[...] durch den der Transposition ersetzt, der den Vorteil hat, ganz allgemein den ‘Übergang von einem Zeichensystem zu einem anderen’ [...] zu bezeichnen.”

8 Julia Kristeva, “‘Nous deux’ or a (Hi)story of Intertextuality,” *Romanic Review* 93, no. 1–2 (2002): 8.

Thus, a text is always already dialogically polyphonic, “constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.”⁹

Two points have to be made in connection with this famous quote: First, one has to take into account that Kristeva’s concept of “text” goes far beyond the concept of “text as (written) language,” so that one can even conceive of Kristeva’s model as a “model of a universal intertext,”¹⁰ as Müller-Dannhausen claims. Not only language but all other sign systems presuppose/influence/merge into one another. This, of course, has great impact on the concept of the author and extends it – an extension which makes the concept fragile (or emphasizes its existing fragility more clearly). Secondly, it seems important that the phrase “as at *least* double” implies that “poetic language” can be not only two-dimensional but even multi-dimensional.

The distinction between poetic and non-poetic language that Kristeva draws, however, suggests that she remains within binary thinking patterns, which theorists of deconstruction avoid, as, for instance, Paul de Man: “Literature as well as criticism – the difference between them being delusive.”¹¹ For him the difference between “literature as the language most explicitly grounded in rhetoric”¹² and criticism is at most a quantitative (and therefore scientifically useless) one. Literature and criticism are necessarily interwoven. Even scientific texts are, like every other text, literary (by virtue of being rhetorically constructed).

But let us return to Kristeva and her concept of intertextuality by considering the misleading term “mosaic.” Shortly before she introduces the term, she locates “poetic analysis at the sensitive centre of contemporary ‘human’ sciences – at the intersection of language (the true practice of thought) with space (the volume within which signification, through a joining of differences articulates itself).”¹³ And almost at the end of her famous article, she goes even

9 Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 37.

10 Lea Müller-Dannhausen, *Zwischen Pop und Politik: Elfriede Jelineks Intertextuelle Poetik in “wir sind lockvögel baby!”* *Literaturwissenschaft* 24 (Berlin: Frank&Timme, 2011), 14. My translation; German original: “[...] Modell eines universalen Intertextes [...]”

11 Paul de Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 19.

12 Paul de Man, “Rhetoric of Tropes (Nietzsche),” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 109.

13 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

further, stating that “[i]f there is a model for poetic language, it no longer involves lines or surfaces, but rather, space and infinity – concepts amenable to formalization through set theory and the new mathematics.”¹⁴

The text can thus be described as a space rather than a “mosaic.” The extension of the representation of texts as text-surfaces to potentially relational, ever-changing text-spaces also has an impact on the concept of authorship. The author changes from being an instance preceding and/or transcending the text, an extratextual instance, to a figure within the text-space; he/she turns out to be “nothing more than the *linking* of [...] centers.”¹⁵

Although not becoming entirely meaningless, the author loses his/her outstanding importance *for* the text, as he/she becomes part *of* the text, especially if the definition of text is based on Kristeva’s expanded concept, in which everything is (in the) text or, as Derrida puts it, “there is nothing outside of the text (there is no outside-text [...]).”¹⁶ At the same time, however, he/she retains an extraordinary position as a link between the centers, whereby this “he”/“she,” the author – or, as Kristeva calls him/her, the “writing subject”¹⁷ – is even more thoroughly deconstructed. Furthermore, this position is questioned, insofar as there can be no center (at least no spatial center) in a (potentially) infinite space (albeit one that can be described with transfinite numbers).

The text thus exists in the form of a three-dimensional space, namely, according to Kristeva, as the “writing subject [i.e., the author], [the] addressee and [the] exterior texts.”¹⁸ But not only are the texts already “plural,” but also the subject in Kristeva’s further argumentation does not remain undivided (does not remain an in-dividuum). Rather, the subject a) is at least two-fold (Sr and Sd)¹⁹ and b) does not only coincide with the addressees but first of all exists precisely because of the possibility of coinciding with the addressees.²⁰ The argument that the text is readable as a space (though a very complex

14 Ibid., 58.

15 Ibid., 61, note 18. Emphasis original.

16 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158.

17 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

18 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

19 Sr stands for “subject of enunciation,” Sd for “subject of utterance”; *ibid.*, 57.

20 Ibid., 45: “The writer is thus the subject of narration transformed by his having included himself within the narrative system; he is neither nothingness nor anybody, but the possibility of permutation from S [= subject of narration; author’s note] to A [= addressee; author’s note], from story to discourse and from discourse to story.” See also A. K. M. Adam’s contribution to this volume on psychological exegesis, 186. The theory of the unconscious also assumes a divided self: “The entire field of psychological theory, science, practice and research rests on the premise that we are to a greater or lesser extent strangers to ourselves.”

one) is established by referring to Bakhtin, who introduces the “specific word status.”²¹ “By introducing the *status of the word* as a minimal structural unit, Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them.”²²

Thus, the writer is always also a reader when he/she writes, which “first of all [raises] writing and reading to the same level.” At the same time, the text turns from being a product to being a “‘productivity (*productivité*)’ [...] which does not depend on a subjectivity,”²³ because the author “is neither nothingness nor anybody, but the possibility of permutation from”²⁴ the author to the reader – and vice versa.

The author, however, not only *is* also a reader, but he/she exists because he/she is created by the reader. Still, the author does not disappear completely in favor of the reader, due to the fact that the reader is just as dependent on the author as the other way around: “I speak and you hear me, therefore we are,” Julia Kristeva quotes Francis Ponge, thus recalling Nietzsche’s writer-wanderer and his shadow. As the shadow is cast by the wanderer and is thus constituted, it likewise posits the wanderer by giving him a voice: “As it is so long since I heard your voice, I would like to give you an opportunity of speaking.”²⁵ As the wanderer speaks, however, he posits himself: “It almost seems as though it were I myself speaking, though in an even weaker voice than mine.”²⁶ What is clearly indicated here is the rhetorical mode of *prosopopeia*,²⁷ as defined by Paul de Man: The author only comes into existence within/through dialogue (through the other to whom he/she responds but whom he/she also creates); the author is created simultaneously with the text but is also dissolved (splintered into many authors, as in Kristeva’s text into Sr and Sd, which are mixed with the readers and the texts). This means that precisely what threatens to deconstruct the author at the same time constructs him/her; the author cannot completely disappear because with him/her the reader and the text would

21 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

22 Ibid.

23 Berndt and Tonger-Erk, *Intertextualität*, 39. My translation; German original: “[...] zunächst einmal Schreiben und Lesen auf eine Stufe [...]”; “[...] ‘Produktivität (*productivité*)’ [...], die nicht von einer Subjektivität abhängt [...].”

24 Kristeva, “Word,” 45.

25 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book of Free Spirits*, Cambridge Texts in History and Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 301.

26 Ibid.

27 Cf. also Oda Wischmeyers’s use of *prosopopoía*, in this volume, 35, as the authorial technique of speaking as another person (derived from Greek *prósopon*, “face”, “person” and *poién*, “to make”).

disappear – and thus the basis of his/her disappearances *and* of his/her being. Author, reader and text are indissolubly linked:

The writer's interlocutor, then, is the writer himself, but as reader of another text. The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text re-reading itself as it rewrites itself. The dialogical structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text.²⁸

The author is “multipliiert”²⁹ (multiplied), to cite Bärbel Lücke, who coined this concept – a neologism merging the word *multiplied* with Derrida's *pli* – with regard to the writings of Elfriede Jelinek. The author is writer, reader, interlocutor and text (and is none of them); he is neither author nor non-author (in the sense of a creative, independent authority). Author, reader and text, understood as a form of text-space, as intertext (and thus its authors, readers and texts as text-spaces, as intertexts, not only ad infinitum but transfinite, beyond finite), become indistinguishable. At stake is not the abolition of the concepts of author-reader-text but the abolition of the separability of those concepts, a theoretical trait in which Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, interpreted and modified by Kristeva, becomes visible – a notion of dialogism that, although owing

much to Hegel, must not be confused with Hegelian dialectics, based on a triad and thus on struggle and projection (a movement of transcendence), which does not transgress the Aristotelian tradition founded on substance and causality. Dialogism replaces these concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather toward harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation.³⁰

²⁸ Kristeva, “Word,” 56–57.

²⁹ Bärbel Lücke, “Elfriede Jelineks Ästhetische Verfahren und das Theater der Dekonstruktion: Von ‘Bambiland/Babel’ über ‘Parsifal (Laß o Welt o Schreck laß nach)’ (für Christoph Schlingensiefels ‘Area 7’) zum Königinnendrama ‘Ulrike Maria Stuart,’” in *Elfriede Jelinek: “ICH WILL KEIN THEATER”: Mediale Überschreitungen*, ed. Pia Janke et al., DISKURSE. KONTEXTE.IMPULSE: Publikationen des Elfriede-Jelinek-Forschungszentrums 3 (Wien: Praesens, 2007), 62.

³⁰ Kristeva, “Word,” 58.

The logic operating within the system of binary oppositions, the “logic of codified discourse”³¹ “based on the 0–1 interval,”³² is exceeded not least because every word – and thus every text – subverts it. Kristeva attributes dialogism to poetic language,³³ in the same way that she generally attempts to separate science and poetry, polyphonic and monologic novels, etc. This very approach turns out to be one of the most outstanding differences between her theoretical understanding of this matter and that of de Man or Derrida.

Closely interwoven with the notion of dialogue (and not clearly distinguishable from it)³⁴ is Bakhtin’s term “ambivalence,” which Kristeva also adopts. The fact that oppositions cannot be clearly separated from each other, that the “double structures [are] overlapping,”³⁵ that dyads (binary oppositions) become describable and negotiable, “in the sense [...] of *one and other*”³⁶ and not in the logic of “either/or,” holds a deeply political potential: “Disputing the laws of language based on the 0–1 interval, the carnival challenges god, authority and social law; in so far as it is dialogical, it is rebellious.”³⁷ By subverting the prevailing logic (which actually is the logic of the dominating discursive regime) by replacing³⁸ it by the logic of dialogism – which is firstly “the logic of distance and relationship between the different units of a sentence or narrative structure, indicating a becoming,” secondly “a logic of analogy and non-exclusive opposition, opposed to monologic levels of causality and identifying

31 Ibid., 36.

32 Ibid., 49.

33 See inter alia *ibid.*, 58: “[I]f there is a model for *poetic* language, it no longer involves lines or surfaces, but rather, space and infinity – concepts amenable to formalization through set theory and the new mathematics.” Emphasis added.

34 Ibid., 37: “In Bakhtin’s work, these two axes, which he calls dialogue and ambivalence, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin [...]”

35 Ibid., 39.

36 Ibid., 40.

37 Ibid., 49.

38 Whether the logic of 0–1 can actually be replaced by the logic of dialogism remains questionable, although Kristeva is quite optimistic: “The path charted between the two poles of dialogue radically abolishes problems of causality, finality, etc., from our philosophical arena. It suggests the importance of the dialogical principle for a space of thought much larger than that of the novel. More than binarism, dialogism may well become the basis of our time’s intellectual structure. The predominance of the novel and other ambivalent literary structures; the communal, carnivalesque phenomena attracting young people; quantum exchanges; and current interest in the correlational symbolism of Chinese philosophy – to cite only a few striking elements of modern thought – all confirm this hypothesis.” However, it is acknowledged that “one of the fundamental problems facing contemporary semiotics is precisely to describe this ‘other logic’ without denaturing it” (*Ibid.*, 59).

determination,” and finally “a logic of the ‘transfinite’”³⁹ – the notion of the (usually masculine) godlike author preceding the text (and thus the reader) is brought under question. This may cause quite awkward feelings in the readers, who are accustomed to “apostrophize” the author in order to ultimately understand what his/her text “actually means”; the discomfort is increased for those exegetes who believe that this author is actually God himself/herself.

2 Julia Kristeva and Paul de Man

It is not by accident that I choose the term “apostrophize” in reference to Paul de Man, which is, so to say, an intertextual anachronism, since Paul de Man’s text changes Kristeva’s text although it was written later. This intertextual anachronism is the result of Peter Clar’s interpretation, appearing after both of these texts and in some sense created out of Kristeva’s text (which already embraces and broadens Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism), and which is also influenced by Frauke Berndt and Lily Tonger-Erk’s interpretation of Kristeva’s approach. According to Berndt and Tonger-Erk, Kristeva’s theoretical approach “allows productive readings of literary texts, which not only include earlier, but also later texts [...]”⁴⁰ just as Bakhtin already opens the “dialogical word not only for earlier words, but also for future answers.”⁴¹ To “apostrophize” the opposite, following Paul de Man, is not simply to question or address it. Apostrophizing the opposite and thereby giving it a voice means creating the opposite and at the same time creating oneself. To describe this phenomenon theoretically, de Man uses the rhetorical figure *prosopopeia*, which, as he claims, is “the trope of autobiography.”⁴² De Man’s definition of *prosopopeia* is a decisive basis for my own reflections about the author, as I have shown already in “*Ich bleibe, aber weg*: Dekonstruktion der AutorInnenfigur(en) bei Elfriede Jelinek*.”⁴³ Coming

39 Ibid., 43.

40 Berndt and Tonger-Erk, *Intertextualität*, 48. My translation; German original: “[...] produktive Lektüren von literarischen Texten, die nicht nur frühere, sondern auch spätere Texte [...] einbeziehen [...]”

41 Ibid., 33. My translation; German original: “[...] dialogische Wort eben nicht nur auf frühere Wörter, sondern auch auf zukünftige Antworten hin geöffnet [...]”

42 Paul de Man, “Autobiography as De-Facement,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 76.

43 Peter Clar, “*Ich bleibe, aber weg*: Dekonstruktion der AutorInnenfigur(en) bei Elfriede Jelinek* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2017).

On Paul de Man’s definition of *prosopopeia*, see inter alia: Anna Babka, *Unterbrochen: Gender und die Tropen der Autobiographie*, Passagen Literaturtheorie (Wien: Passagen, 2002); Bettine Menke, “De Mans ‘Prosopopöie’ der Lektüre: Die Entleerung des

towards the end of my remarks, allow me to take a quick look at Paul de Man's reflections on authorship, without losing sight of Kristeva, whose theory of intertextuality overlaps at some points with the ideas of deconstruction. The parallels range from the decentralization of the subject, the merging of author and reader (the "process of reading-writing"⁴⁴) and the extension of the concept of "text" to the conception of language as a character-system which is always already divided and ambivalent – an ambivalence which provides subversive (and creative) potential. Nevertheless, deconstructive reading strategies and Kristeva's ideas do at points also differ, although it seems that some of those differences can be traced back not to the approaches themselves but to the consequences drawn from those approaches.

2.1 *Paul de Man's Concept of Authorship*

In "Rhetoric of Blindness," Paul de Man describes three main ways in which modern literary scholarship answers the question of the characteristics of literary language. One answer, according to de Man, introduces the category of "temporality," another the category of "form," and the third is based on "a perspective [...] centered in a self, in the subjectivity of the author or of the author-reader relationship."⁴⁵ This last category states the fragmentation, duplication, problematization and disappearance of the "I,"⁴⁶ as can be seen in the texts of Maurice Blanchot and Georges Poulet:

Monuments," in *Ästhetik und Rhetorik: Lektüren zu Paul de Man*, ed. Karl Heinz Bohrer, Aesthetica (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), 34–78; Bettine Menke, "Memnons Bild: Stimme aus dem Dunkel," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 68 (1994), 125–144; Bettine Menke, *Prosopopoia: Stimme und Text bei Brentano, Hoffmann, Kleist und Kafka* (München: Fink, 2000).

44 Kristeva, "Word," 36.

45 Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, Theory and History of Literature 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 105.

46 Most of the important theories of the twentieth century dealing with the concept of authorship either assume that the (author-) subject is split and/or introduce various authors. Wayne C. Booth, e.g., distinguishes between the real author, the implicit author and the fictive narrator; Boris Tomaševsky distinguishes not only the author with and without biography but also differentiates between cultural-historical and literary-scientific research; and Michel Foucault splits the author into four different functions. Even Sigmund Freud, whose concept of authorship is still strongly connected with the poet as a person, differentiates "part-egos" into which "a modern writer split[s] up his ego by self-observation" (Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreams," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), 9: 150.

For excerpts from all of the aforementioned texts, with short introductions (in German), see Fotis Jannidis et al., eds., *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft* (Stuttgart:

Whereas it seems impossible to assert the presence of a self without in fact recording its absence, the thematic assertion of this absence reintroduces a form of selfhood, albeit in the highly reductive and specialized form of a self-reading. And if the act of reading, potential or actual, is indeed a constitutive part of literary language, then it presupposes a confrontation between a text and another entity that seems to exist prior to the elaboration of a subsequent text and that, for all its impersonality and anonymity, still tends to be designated by metaphors derived from selfhood. [...] It turns out, however, that what is here claimed to be an origin always depends on the prior existence of an entity that lies beyond reach of the self, though not beyond the reach of a language that destroys the possibility of origin.⁴⁷

De Man points out that Blanchot's and Poulet's texts are establishing an entity that precedes the texts. This entity, which is strictly literary but capable of producing space and time, is not "always-already-existing." On the contrary, it is one which has to come into existence and has to be described, "for all its impersonality and anonymity," by means of "metaphors derived from selfhood," metaphors such as "author." The entity preceding the text is an empty space, a space which is filled by all those who are dealing with the text, the readers as well as the author, namely, the author-reader – the author who is, as Kristeva put it, his/her own "interlocutor." Thus, this "author," who seems to be meta-physically related to the text (but at the same time depends on another entity that is "beyond reach of the self, though not beyond the reach of a language"), is a literary, constructed figure. This "author-figure" is constructed because the recipient creates a description intended to break "impersonality and anonymity," a description which of course is dependent upon language, a language that "destroys the possibility of an origin." The author is created by language (in the broadest sense), which itself originates in the author (but the possibility of the origin is destroyed). In order to save itself, to make sure "that it really is language after all,"⁴⁸ language must seek a consciousness outside of itself, an outside that can only be found, however, by means of language and thus never outside of it – an unsolvable paradox.

Reclam, 2000). For English translations see Seán Burke, ed., *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

47 de Man, "Rhetoric of Blindness," 105.

48 Werner Hamacher, "Lectio: De Mans Imperativ," in *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 186.

Paul de Man continues: “Poulet’s belief in the power of an original *cogito*” and “Blanchot’s claim of meta-Mallarméan impersonality [...] are] defeated by their own critical results.”⁴⁹ It is above all Derrida who questions these “metaphors derived from selfhood,” with which the entity preceding the text is described as breaking its anonymity. Based on Derrida’s reading of Rousseau, de Man shows that Derrida aims to discredit the

absolute value [from presence and absence, here referring to the author; author’s note] as a base for metaphysical insight [...]. Terms such as “passive,” “conscious,” “deliberate,” etc., all of which postulate a notion of the self as self-presence, turn out to be equally relevant or irrelevant when used on either side of the differential scale. [...] The key to the status of Rousseau’s language is not to be found in his consciousness, in his greater or lesser awareness or control over the cognitive value of his language. It can only be found in the knowledge that this language, as language, conveys about itself, thereby asserting the priority of the category of language over that of presence [...].⁵⁰

It is language (thus the text) itself that communicates knowledge about itself; it is language (thus the text), which already contains its own deconstruction.⁵¹ If, however, language is prioritized over presence, as it at least “asserts”, does this mean that the discussion about the author is obsolete? No, because at the same time as the author is posited by language, language is dependent on the author in the same way. It is not about erasing the category of the author simply because the author can never be completely erased without causing the reason for his disappearance (the text/the language/the reader) also to disappear – again a parallel to Kristeva. The author remains present, however, “at the expense of literal truth.”⁵² As a side note, and despite all critique regarding the search for the “intention” of the author (“[T]he only irreducible, ‘intention’ of a text is that of its constitution”⁵³), de Man is not denying the existence of intention but instead shows that the question of the author’s intention remains

49 de Man, “Rhetoric of Blindness,” 106.

50 Ibid., 118–119.

51 Exactly this “dimension of critical knowledge of their own constitution,” which literary texts contain *necessarily*, is the reason why “literary scholarship” exists in the first place (Hamacher, “Lectio,” 182).

52 de Man, “Rhetoric of Tropes,” 112.

53 Paul de Man, “Reading (Proust),” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 65.

unanswerable.⁵⁴ For even though there is no word or sign which does not forfeit “its strict semantic intention at the instant it is posited and exposed to the possibility of being understood,” the possibility that a text (word/sign) tells the truth can never be ruled out, simply because “the contention, that the utterance, once liberated from all referential relations, is a free play of signifiers, would itself necessarily be referential.” Therefore, one could claim that something like truth, like intention, etc., does exist. One can never fix it, however, since all those aspects that would suggest that the assertion of its opposite, of pure subjectivity, of the text “as the will to itself,”⁵⁵ etc., do indeed exist would only exist as already fragmented.

2.2 *Julia Kristeva und Paul de Man*

De Man’s disapproval of autobiographical readings is clearer than his criticism of the question of intention. Referring to autobiographical interpretations of Heinrich von Kleist’s *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, he states ironically:

But he may just as well have selected this date at random, as he wrote city of M-----, like Mainz, although he was to go to Mainz only in 1803. Who is to say that this notation is random while the other isn’t? Who can tell what terrible secrets may be hidden behind this harmless looking letter M? Kleist himself is probably the one least able to tell us and, if he did, we would be well-advised not to take his word for it. To decide whether or not Kleist knew his text to be autobiographical or pure fiction is like deciding whether or not Kleist’s destiny, as a person and as a writer, was sealed by the fact that a certain doctor of philosophy happened to bear the ridiculous name of Krug.⁵⁶

Consequently, Paul de Man not only critically revises the concept of “autobiography,” but encodes it and defines the term – radically diverging from common definitions – as “a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts.”⁵⁷ However, like Paul de Man’s radical deconstruction of autobiographical reading, many aspects of the theories of authorship from

54 See A. K. M. Adam’s statement about authorial intention, in this volume, 204: “[....] It is often opaque even to the author-agent, and how much more to a critical observer relatively distant from the agent-author!”.

55 Hamacher, “Lectio,” 196.

56 Paul de Man, “Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist’s *Über das Marionettentheater*,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 284.

57 de Man, “Autobiography,” 70.

both him and Julia Kristeva cannot be further discussed here. And yet, in view of the few aspects that I have tried to elucidate, it becomes evident that both theoretical conceptions (both “text-spaces”) are similar in many respects, especially in their political implications.

The assumption of the posited author, as outlined above, deeply affects the traditional oppositions of author/reader or author/text. However, this assumption does not simply reverse these oppositions, since the assumption can never be fully implemented (because the reader/text is as dependent on the author as vice versa). The concept of binary oppositions itself is shaken, thus subverting all binary-structured (and therefore hierarchical) categories, whether temporal (before/after), political (master/servant), gender (man/woman) or religious (god/creation).

The main difference between Kristeva and de Man is – simply put – that Kristeva still seems to believe in the possibility of logic in/through language since, as she argues, the carnivalesque “frees speech from historical constraints.”⁵⁸ Paul de Man, on the other hand, like Derrida, denies the possibility of this freedom. Johanna Bossinade’s notion – that Judith Butler “by using the theorem of the performance, shook the claim to an original position of identity,” “while Kristeva leaves no doubt that every new design is intended to claim an original, meaningful, albeit always vulnerable, position of identity”⁵⁹ – can be applied to the difference between de Man and Kristeva in a similar way. Both “models”⁶⁰ use the already existing ambivalent structure of language to undermine every construction of identity and in particular the construction of the author. But the consequence – the radicalism that characterizes deconstruction, which claims that meaning is never more than momentarily valid – exceeds, in my view, the concept of intertextuality developed by Kristeva. Either way, both approaches can facilitate scrutiny of perceived structures, structures that are hierarchical, violent and ultimately to be rejected.

58 Kristeva, “Word,” 52.

59 Bossinade, *Literaturtheorie*, 100. My translation; German original: “[...] mit Hilfe des Theorems der Performanz den Anspruch auf eine originale Identitätsposition zu erschüttern gesucht,” “während Kristeva keinen Zweifel daran [lässt], dass jeder neue Entwurf doch wieder auf eine, wenngleich stets angreifbare, sinnhafte Setzung hinausläuft.”

60 At various times, Derrida denies calling deconstruction a method or model; see, e.g., Jacques Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” in *Derrida and Différance*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), 1–5.

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Between Intention and Reception: Textual Meaning-Making in Intersubjective Perspective

Michal Beth Dinkler

The organizers of the conference out of which this volume emerges established its topic in the form of a question: “Exegesis without Authorial Intention?” Combined with the conference subtitle, “Approaches to Textual Meaning,” the implication is that exegesis – with or without authorial intent – is the appropriate or self-evident method by which New Testament scholars should determine textual meaning. And yet, the meaning and method(s) of exegesis itself are not always clear. Therefore, following Jesus’ common dialogical strategy from the Gospels, my response to the titular conference question is to pose yet another: Why exegesis in the first place? What is it that we mean when we say we are “doing exegesis”? Even if we can answer that vexing question, another quickly presents itself: Is what we are doing when we “do exegesis” the only or the best way to “approach textual meaning”?

My chapter begins by interrogating mainstream scholarly assumptions about NT exegesis, many of which are inextricably bound up with the problematics towards which the conference question gestures, namely, authorial intention. With reference to reader-response theories, anthropological studies of storytelling and ancient views of textual agency, I propose that a preferable alternative to approaching textual meaning in terms of exegesis is to think instead in terms of intersubjective *diēgēsis*. The chapter closes with a discussion of Paul’s Corinthian correspondence in light of this proposal.

1 What Exactly Is Exegesis?

In search of a clear definition of biblical exegesis, I turned to a number of handbooks in the field that were written precisely in order to explain and demonstrate the concept. And yet, the broad and basic definitions such books offer are by no means simple or straightforward. In their introduction to *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, Stanley Porter and Kent Clarke aptly articulate the challenge:

There are few terms in biblical studies like “exegesis” that are used so freely and represent so many different things to various scholars and students [...]. Part of the term’s perceived ambiguity may reside in its often synonymous relationship to a number of other words such as “interpretation” and “hermeneutics.”¹

Some define exegesis by referring to a specific activity: Exegesis is “the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text,”² or more narrowly, “the historical investigation into the meaning of the biblical text.”³ Others delineate the purpose behind the action: Exegesis is “the careful, methodologically self-aware study of a text undertaken in order to produce an accurate and useful interpretation thereof.”⁴

One finds with intriguing frequency attempts to clarify the meaning of *exegesis* by referring to its etymological origin, the Greek verb *exēgeisthai*, “to lead out” (*ek*, “out” + *hēgeisthai*, “to lead”). Typically understood as leading meaning out of the text, exegesis is often opposed to *eisegesis*, or importing ideas or messages “into” (*eis*) the text that are not really “there.” Douglas Stuart, for instance, advises, “Do everything you can to milk the passage for its theological value, but do not force anything from or into the passage.”⁵ *Exegesis*, in other words, is portrayed as the appropriate, presuppositionless way of determining textual meaning, while *eisegesis* is cast as its (usually anachronistic) biased opposite.⁶

Complexities remain, however. With reference to the handbook explanations cited above, one might point out that scholars conceive of and go about historical, literary and theological analyses of texts differently. They draw different conclusions about “the meaning” of the very same texts, and they evaluate interpretations as “accurate and useful” for different reasons and according to different criteria. Unanswered questions remain, as well: If *exegesis* refers to

- 1 Stanley E. Porter and Kent D. Clarke, “What Is Exegesis? An Analysis of Various Definitions,” in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 4.
- 2 Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 12.
- 3 Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1.
- 4 Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 4th ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 64.
- 5 Douglas K. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 4th ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 25.
- 6 Dale B. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 7.

the “leading out” of textual meaning, who or what is the active agent doing the leading (e.g., the author, the text, the reader)? Whence does the active agent “lead out” the textual meaning (e.g., the text on the page or the extratextual world to which the text more or less successfully refers)? Who has the authority to determine the proper methods by which one searches for and leads out the textual meaning (e.g., Christians who believe the text is divinely inspired, academically trained biblical scholars, interested but historically uninformed readers)?

There are multiple possible answers to each of these questions, of course. One prominent view, which persists despite poststructuralist proclamations of the “death of the author,” is that the historical author controls textual meaning.⁷ Along with the etymological explanation of exegesis versus eisegesis, one often finds the corollary that the goal of exegesis is to discover the original intention of the author (or community, editor, redactor, etc.) who composed the text.⁸ Gordon Fee says as much: “Exegesis is primarily concerned with intentionality: What did the author *intend* his original readers to understand?”⁹ Craig L. Blomberg and Jennifer Foutz Markley explicitly state that exegesis refers “to the process of leading out from a text *its original meaning*.”¹⁰ John Hayes and Carl Holladay similarly assert, “Through exegesis, the interpreter reads, examines, and listens to the words of the text as a medium communicating *the author’s message*.”¹¹ And Darrell Bock and Buist Fanning go so far as to say that the exegete “needs to recognize that words do not automatically have meaning. They *receive their meaning from the author who wrote the words*.”¹²

Such discussions of exegesis and authorial intent also often denigrate approaches that emphasize the reader’s role in constructing meaning. As is now

7 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148. See also Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

8 Cf. against this view Clarissa Breu and her discussion of Derrida’s “iterability,” in this volume, 128: “[.... A]ccording to Derrida, the so-called original context should not be prioritized. A word structure is independent and part of a language system that cannot be reduced to an original context. To speak intertextually, the original context is most likely not the first time these words were used. They can be transported to other contexts and be meaningful to readers even when they are not aware of their previous context.”

9 Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 1. Emphasis original.

10 Craig L. Blomberg and Jennifer Foutz Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), xii. Emphasis added.

11 John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 139. Emphasis added.

12 Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 137. Emphasis added.

well-known, reader-response critics like Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish argue that readers' perceptions of a text's meaning are inevitably shaped by their socially constructed interpretive frameworks and the variable mental processes involved in reading – encountering new ideas sequentially, resolving ambiguities, anticipating meanings based on cultural norms and generic conventions, etc. Author-centered exegetes commonly reject such views as leading to interpretive anarchy. If readers' ideological commitments influence their readings of a text, these exegetes ask, is it ever possible for texts to exert a transformative influence on readers? Or, similarly, is critical analysis even possible? Again, Fee is representative:

Reader-response criticism does not seek to understand the historical world behind the text [... R]eader-response criticism is concerned with the world in front of the text [...] and, in the end, the reader (and the reader alone) is responsible for the production of "meaning." [Therefore] anyone's reading of the text is as valid as another's.¹³

This is an incorrect understanding of contemporary reader-response theories, but we shall return to that later.

The linguistic turn of the twentieth century famously challenged the concept of authorial intent; these developments are well-documented and need no recapitulation here. Suffice it to say that it is impossible to recover the original intent of an author who died long ago (and therefore cannot corroborate or contradict our perceptions), and even if we could speak with ancient authors, they might not know their own motivations and intentions fully.¹⁴ Furthermore, as deconstructionists emphasize, the selectivity, ambiguity and iterability of all language means that texts have the potential to exceed or fall short of authorial intentions.¹⁵ For these and many other reasons, as Mark Allan Powell observes, it is "accepted as axiomatic in literary circles that the meaning of literature transcends the historical intentions of the author."¹⁶

Biblical critics who define exegesis in terms of authorial intent often fail to address these theoretical challenges, simply going about their exegetical work

¹³ Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 182.

¹⁴ As A. K. M. Adam's contribution to this volume about the unconscious and its presence in interpretation processes suggests.

¹⁵ See also Jochen Flebbe's text on *intentio operis* in this volume and Clarissa Breu's description and application of Derrida's concept of "iterability" to New Testament texts, in this volume, esp. 127–129.

¹⁶ Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 12.

as though the linguistic turn had never occurred.¹⁷ To be sure, such exegetes sometimes recognize that “authorial intent has fallen on hard times,” and some insist that their view “is not naïve or unaware of recent philosophical discussion,” but scholars’ protestations are merely superficial if their exegesis does not change.¹⁸ Bock and Fanning, for example, belie their true aim when they first declare, “One does not try to reproduce what the author must have been thinking at a given point or why he wrote,” but then continue, “Rather the interpreter’s goal is to ascertain *what the writer wanted to communicate* through the terms he chose for his message.” They later assert, “The concern of the exegete is the meaning of the author’s mind.”¹⁹ Other scholars’ “exegetical examples” in the latter half of Bock and Fanning’s book draw conclusions such as, “The apostle had Isa 28:16 in mind” and “The primary issue on the author’s mind is the behavior of the gathered community.”²⁰

To be clear, I do not on principle take issue with the historical quest to determine what a biblical author might have meant to communicate. Indeed, I believe that responsible, informed, historical contextualization is an important aspect of textual interpretation. Rather, I take issue with the conception of textual meaning that underlies and legitimates the common exegesis/eisegesis binary. The problem is that the dichotomy is predicated upon several premises that ultimately undermine it.

What I mean is this: The exegesis/eisegesis binary assumes that texts function as ontological repositories into which authors deposit their communicative intention.²¹ Authorial intention, synonymous with textual meaning, then sits unchanged “in” the text until its recipient(s) “discover(s)” it. As Hayes and Holladay write, “Exegesis does not allow us to master the text so much as it enables us to *enter it*.”²² And as all biblical scholars know, the task of the ex-

17 They often refer to Eric D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).

18 Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 24–28.

19 Ibid., 137, note 2. Emphasis added.

20 Scott S. Cunningham, “Ephesians 2:19–22: The Temple Motif,” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, 387–400 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 394; Donald J. Verseput, “James 1:19–27: Anger in the Congregation,” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, 387–400 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 439.

21 See Oda Wischmeyer, in this volume, 37: “Scholarly text analysis has produced many methodological instruments for discovering the – often hidden – intentions an author has incorporated into his or her text”; for a critique of the “container model of communication,” see Stephen D. Moore, in this volume, 115.

22 Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 22.

egetical search party “entering” biblical texts is especially complicated, not least because of translational challenges, material conditions of our extant manuscripts (many of which are irreparably damaged or missing entirely) and differences between past and present practices of authorship, attribution and publication. Exegesis, traditionally understood, provides the navigational tools necessary for the exegete to overcome these considerable obstacles, find the author’s intended meaning and “lead it out” of the text.

At this point, then, we might return to a question posed earlier: If *exegesis* refers to the “leading out” of textual meaning, who or what is the active agent doing the leading? The obvious answer is the exegete, the one doing the interpreting. Turning to authorial intent as constitutive of textual meaning renders the author’s intended message the “what,” the object being sought. This view of exegesis sets up a subject-object relationship in which the exegete is the active subject “entering” the passive object (the text) in search of meaning. Traditional exegesis wants to disavow readerly influences over textual meaning in pursuit of scholarly objectivity, but this interpretive stance is incompatible with a subject/object conception of exegesis. Despite scholars’ assertions that the author determines textual meaning, despite the suspicion of those who “cede” control to readers, exegesis as traditionally conceived functions rhetorically to sanction the authority of the interpreting subject. It bolsters the meaning-making power of the very reader who purports to have little to no power in the meaning-making process.

The lure of exegesis as authoritative, privileged knowledge wrapped in the guise of objectivity remains remarkably strong, even among biblical critics who hold more nuanced views of textual meaning than those described above. Consider Hayes and Holladay, who allow for multiple potential meanings and recognize the formative role of readerly presuppositions in interpretation; they assert that the goal of exegesis remains “the same: to develop a coherent, informed interpretation that is based on the best knowledge available to us.”²³ But what exactly is “the best knowledge”? And who defines it?

This brings us back to contemporary critical theory’s challenges to traditional exegesis. As Gary Phillips declares:

For exegetes: it is no longer possible as responsible professionals to ignore the presence of theory and its impact upon what biblical critics say and do [...]. The fantasy has been dispelled that traditional historical exegesis is neither theoretical nor ideological. Non-theoretical, non-ideological exegesis has never existed except as a romantic construct,

23 Ibid., 21–22.

itself an ideological imposition on the way exegetes were taught to represent to themselves what it is they said and did.²⁴

Anna Runesson (among others) has argued that modern notions of biblical exegesis were fundamentally shaped by “the processes of colonization.”²⁵ Critical theory’s call to rigorous reflexivity prompts us to ask: How might we be perpetuating colonizing strategies and structures when we “lead the meaning out” of a text?

The subject/object binary, animating, traditional definitions of exegesis are inadequate for several reasons. First, texts are multivalent and complex; as Paul de Man²⁶ puts it, all “assumedly monadic [i.e., unified] totalities” contain “hidden fragmentations” that threaten to unravel any claims to authoritative stability.²⁷ Written texts have indeterminacies and multiple potentialities for meaning, a point all too evident in the long history of disputes over biblical interpretation. Second, reader-response critics are right to insist that interpretation is dynamic and subjective. Readers come to texts just as they come to other people – informed by their own presuppositions and experiences – such that readers in different contexts are predisposed to understand texts in different ways.

It may be useful at this point to address the anxiety on the part of some scholars (noted above) that reader-response criticism disregards the author and ultimately devolves into interpretive relativism. On the one hand, there is an important cautionary note here. Rita Felski levies a critique at critical theorists whose constant “problematizing, interrogating, and subverting” of texts “[...] assigns all value to the act of reading and none to the objects read. Are these objects really inert and indifferent, supine and submissive, entirely at the mercy of our critical maneuvers?”²⁸

On the other hand, it is hardly the case that all critical theorists advocate decontextualized, ahistorical interpretation; they tend to privilege the reader above the producer of a text, but they do not jettison evaluative criteria by which

24 Gary Phillips, “Exegesis as Critical Praxis: Reclaiming History and Text from a Postmodern Perspective,” *Semeia* 51 (1990): 9, 12.

25 Anna Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies*, *BibInt* 103 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 29.

26 For more details, see Peter Clar’s analysis of Paul de Man’s theory of authorship, in this volume, esp. 56–61.

27 Paul de Man, ed., *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 249.

28 Rita Felski (here drawing on Eve Sedgwick), *Uses of Literature*, Blackwell Manifestos (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 2.

to adjudicate between different readings. Paul Ricoeur, for example, warns, “Hermeneutics does not give us the right to say just anything whatsoever.”²⁹ In my view, reader-response critics’ most significant contribution is the insight that construals of textual meaning always differ based on readers’ pre-conceived intertextual and extratextual repertoires, the conceptual schemas upon which readers draw to fill in unwritten gaps and make sense of a message. Actual readers’ social and ideological locations inevitably influence their appropriation of texts.³⁰

This is perfectly compatible with the view that texts also influence readers. Rhetorical approaches to literature emphasize that texts function actively in specific historical situations – shaping, not merely reflecting, the real worlds of communities and individuals. Not only that, but texts are sites of contestation and negotiation within communities’ ongoing discursive struggles. This is why, for example, Elizabeth Castelli characterizes early Christian narratives as “a form of culture making.”³¹ Texts are not simply inert, passive objects; they create real effects in the world. Felski is right: “Reading is far from being a one-way street; while we cannot help but impose ourselves on literary texts, we are also, inevitably, exposed to them.”³² When we construct the reader-text relationship in the static, detached terms of an active subject and passive object, we trivialize the text’s own ability to change readers. We shall in due course return to this point with respect to antiquity.

First, let us consider the fact that, for centuries, many have considered biblical exegesis in terms of God’s Spirit “leading out” the textual meaning. This might seem to suggest that Christian readers, at least, escape the problematic subject/object construction of textual interpretation, since they conceive of the biblical text as an active subject capable of changing readers. Indeed, biblical texts themselves support this perception. To give just a few examples, the Word of God is described as “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12), “inspired by God and [...]

29 Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 304.

30 See Patrick E. Spencer, *Rhetorical Texture and Narrative Trajectories of the Lukan Galilean Ministry Speeches: Hermeneutical Appropriation by Authorial Readers of Luke-Acts*, LNTS 341 (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Also see the now-classic treatment of this topic, Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading from this Place, vol. 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

31 Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 4.

32 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 3.

useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). Furthermore, "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:20–21).

Belief in God's self-revelation through Scripture means that, for many Christian readers, biblical texts "take on the character of personal address."³³ Clark Pinnock describes the Bible as "[...] the Word that issues forth when the Spirit takes the Word and renders it the living voice of the Lord. Therefore, it is not a text we can master through techniques but a text that wants to master us."³⁴ Pinnock declares that the text leads or "masters" the reader as a divine agent, the embodiment of the living Lord. For some Christian readers, the belief that God leads the reader (and/or that the text is God's mouthpiece) makes academic exegesis seem threatening, but assurances also abound. Richard Erickson's handbook, tellingly titled *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear out of Critical Method*, describes exegesis as "primarily a listening device, a systematized process" by which people hear the message of God.³⁵ Other scholars identify intentions in terms of dual authorship: "God could have multiple referents and time frames in mind, even if the prophet [i.e., the author] may not have known all the constituent details."³⁶ From this perspective, the source of authority and the locus of textual meaning are principally found in the text's status as intentional divine revelation.³⁷

Besides the obvious fact that, as an academic enterprise, biblical exegesis cannot be restricted to those who consider the texts divinely inspired, I wish to emphasize that this conception of textual meaning also falls short. It simply inverts and reinscribes the problematic subject/object dichotomy: The Word of God (the subject) acts on the reader (a passive object "mastered" by the text/God). However, as feminist and postcolonial scholars (among others) attest by

33 Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2002), 156.

34 Ibid.

35 Richard J. Erickson, *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear out of Critical Method* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 27.

36 Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 264–265. Cf. Jochen Flebbe's much more differentiated view on the connection between God's Word and biblical texts in his contribution to this volume.

37 Kevin Vanhoozer, though conversant with contemporary philosophical debates on these issues, grounds his defense of authorial intent in a faith conviction: He argues (contra Derrida) that humans can formulate an unmediated view of reality because God is an intentionally communicative agent. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 264.

intentionally reading “against the grain,” not everyone is “mastered” by biblical texts. Additionally, a subject/object conception of exegesis cannot explain why even those who do claim to be led by the divinely inspired text still come to completely contradictory conclusions about its meaning. As Abraham Lincoln famously pointed out in his Second Inaugural Address of 1865, proponents of and activists against slavery “read the same Bible, and pray to the same God.”

In light of the above observations, I argue that the relationship between a reader and a text is more helpfully conceived in dynamic, intersubjective terms – that is, as an interaction between two active agents, rather than an active subject and passive object.³⁸ The following section makes my case.

2 Intersubjective *diēgēsis*: A Proposal

I suggest that we shift our approach to textual meaning from *exegesis* to *diēgēsis* (“narration” in Greek). *Diēgēsis* comes from the verb *diēgeomai* (“to narrate”), which is a *propos* when it comes to textual interpretation for two reasons. The first is a granular etymological point: We have already considered the problems with exegesis’ *exēgeisthai*, “to lead out,” and eisegesis’ *eisēgeisthai*, “to lead in”; in contrast, *diēgeomai* derives from *dia*, “between” + *hēgeomai* (the latter being a strengthened form of *agō*, “to lead,” from which we also get *hēgeisthai*). Thus, instead of exegesis’ “leading the meaning out” of an inert and passive text, *diēgēsis* suggests a mutual leading *dia* (“between”) two active agents – text and reader.³⁹

The second reason that *diēgēsis* (“narration”) is a useful way to conceive of approaches to textual meaning is that, as poststructuralists argue, interpretation itself is a form of narration.⁴⁰ To use Roland Barthes’ well-known

38 My proposal in the following section adopts prose from – and develops ideas that were inchoate in – Michal Beth Dinkler, “Telling Transformation: How We Redeem Narratives and Narratives Redeem Us,” *WW* 31 (2011), 287–296.

39 This is similar to, but distinct from, the dialogical hermeneutics of philosophers like Gadamer, Buber and Von Balthasar. See Steven Kepnes, *The Text as Thou: Martin Buber’s Dialogical Hermeneutic and Narrative Theology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992). A more developed account of my view of hermeneutics can be found in Michal Beth Dinkler, “Beyond the Normative/Descriptive Divide: Hermeneutics and Narrativity,” in *Verstehen und Interpretieren*, ed. Andreas Mauz and Christiane Tietz, *Hermeneutik und Interpretationstheorie* 1 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, forthcoming).

40 In the field of history, Hayden White most famously established that “History” is never simply chronicle, but also narrative creation. Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” in *On Narrative*, ed. William J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 2. See also Hayden White, “The Historical Text as

distinction between *readerly* and *writerly* (*lisible* and *scriptible*) texts, the subject/object conception of exegesis construes the text as *readerly* (i.e., the reader consumes a product, an inert text), whereas the intersubjective conception of *diēgēsis* considers the text as *writerly* (i.e., the reader participates in meaning-making – “writing” the text).⁴¹ Importantly, this is true even when the text itself purports to be a straightforward, objective, historical account.⁴²

I do not mean to conflate author and reader. An author's relationship to a text is uniquely generative; of all the combinations of words at her disposal, she chooses this particular combination and records it in this particular way. But then – and this is Barthes' point with his famous “Death of the Author” essay – the actual author loses control once she sends a text out in the world.⁴³ The author functions as a catalyst for an interaction between text and reader, which cannot be managed or predicted. A reader's relationship to the text is generative, too, but in a different way: He makes sense of a received text as a linguistic act initiated by someone other than himself. Textual meaning is thus contingent on factors that are relatively fixed (e.g., a specific language system or genre, material realities of manuscripts) *and* fluid (e.g., ambiguities, social locations, individual subjectivities). These elements of the text-reader relationship function together to create potentialities for meaning (Iser's “potential multiplicity of connections”), which are differently realized and appropriated depending on the reader's *inter*-action with the text.⁴⁴

Furthermore, I suggest that we consider the space between reader and text as a space of liminal intersubjectivity (*inter*, “between” + *subjectivity*, “a thinking subject”) – or, to adopt a phrase from Hannah Arendt, a “subjective

Literary Artifact,” in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, 81–99 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Kuisma Korhonen, ed., *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History/Literature Debate* (New York: Rodopi, 2006).

41 Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 4.

42 For more on the relationship between history, narration and interpretation, see Michal Beth Dinkler, “Narratological Jesus Research: An Oxymoron?” in *Jesus, quo vadis? Entwicklungen und Perspektiven der aktuellen Jesusforschung: Conference Proceedings*, ed. Eckart Schmidt, *Biblich-Theologische Studien* 177 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2018), 187–230.

43 See Clarissa Breu's comparison of author-names and hashtags, in this volume, 126: “Everyone can use them; there is no simple means to control them. [...] Whoever uses a hashtag willingly gives up control over it.”

44 Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 278.

in-between” – marked by a mutuality of meaning-making.⁴⁵ When reader-response critics employ the term *intersubjectivity*, they tend to refer to collaborative interpretive communities; I refer here to the intersubjective space between reader and text. Exegesis traditionally construed considers the relationship between a biblical text and its reader in terms of an active subject (e.g., the critical reader or God) and a passive object (e.g., the text or the “mastered” Christian reader). Intersubjective *diēgēsis*, however, envisions the text and the reader *both* as active agents, negotiating their existence and constituting one other.

Perhaps the mutually constitutive dynamic I am describing will be clearer if we consider for a moment anthropologists’ observations about oral storytelling. John Berger, for example, underscores stories’ performative function – they not only reflect but create reality: “A village’s portrait of itself is constructed, not out of stone, but out of words, spoken and remembered: out of opinions, stories, eyewitness reports, legends, comments and hearsay.”⁴⁶

Similarly, ethnographer Michael D. Jackson, who studies storytelling among the Kuranko people of Sierra Leone, observes that “stories are a kind of theatre where we collaborate in reinventing ourselves and authorizing notions, both individual and collective, of who we are.”⁴⁷ Storytelling draws tellers and audiences together, in all their human complexity, to structure, interpret and reflect (upon) human experience – that is, to *make meaning*. Importantly, the Kuranko do not believe that storytellers and listeners are the only active agents engaged in the complexities of communication and interpretation. Stories themselves exert influence, and unpredictably: “As an experienced and performed event, any story is like Heraclitus’ river, differently realized each time it is told and differently signified in the minds of individual listeners.”⁴⁸ For this reason, the Kuranko conclude that “stories are no more the same than people are.”⁴⁹

45 Arendt is referring to the space between public and private realms. For her, stories allow individuals to make personal experiences public and enter into a realm of universal experience. Though Arendt does not stress this, the converse is also true: Public stories shape private experiences, as well. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 183.

46 John Berger, “The Storyteller,” In *The Sense of Sight*, ed. Lloyd Spencer (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 16.

47 Michael D. Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), 16.

48 Michael D. Jackson, “Storytelling Events, Violence, and the Appearance of the Past,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2005): 358, doi: 10.1353/anq.2005.0020.

49 Jackson, “Storytelling Events,” 359.

My contention is that the above observations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to ancient written texts as well, despite their tellers being long dead. In fact, for reasons delineated below, I would say that the Kuranko view of stories and humans mutually and unpredictably affecting each other does better justice to ancient perceptions of texts than the common notion of exegesis as subject acting upon object. We turn now to consider how shifting our conceptions of textual meaning away from traditional exegesis and towards intersubjective *diēgēsis* might change our understandings of the two extant epistles Paul sent to the *ekklesia* in Corinth.

3 Intersubjective *diēgēsis* and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence

We tend to think that humans “do things” with letters but that letters do not “do things” with humans. Accordingly, exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians has remained largely preoccupied with questions about Paul's intentions, the redactional processes “behind” the letters or the constitution and practices of the Corinthian community. The epistles themselves remain inanimate, lifeless objects – created, circulated and consumed by and for humans. However, our view of texts as inert matter – ink on parchment (or pixels on a screen) – meant to transfer abstract ideas (“nonmatter”) to and from active agents (author and reader) is grounded in modern dichotomies (e.g., Cartesian mind/body and matter/nonmatter dualisms) that simply did not exist in antiquity. Considering a text to be, in Scott S. Elliott's words, “a mechanism of conveyance for the transfer of meaning” may seem natural in a capitalist society that treats material objects as commodities for human consumption.⁵⁰ It does not, however, reflect ancient notions; consequently, modern perceptions of exegesis can lead us to misconstrue Paul's rhetoric.

In this section, I wish to demonstrate the interpretive benefits of considering the reader-text relationship in intersubjective terms by focusing on a much-discussed conundrum regarding 1 and 2 Corinthians, namely, the purported discrepancy between a Weak Corporeal Paul “behind” the letter and a Bold Epistolary “Paul” constructed of written words. Concerns about conflicting interpretations of Paul and his writing are so central to these epistles that

50 Scott S. Elliott, “What Is Paul? Mythology and the Neutral in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23,” in *Simulating Aichele: Essays in Bible, Film, Culture and Theory*, ed. Melissa C. Stewart, *The Bible in the Modern World* 69 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 121.

Margaret Mitchell calls 1 and 2 Corinthians “a correspondence course in practical, indeed, tactical hermeneutics.”⁵¹

Pauline scholars typically explain Paul’s defensive tone in 2 Corinthians 10–13 as a response to the “super apostles” of 2 Corinthians 11:5, who object that the Pauline “authorial *parousia* is at such odds with the epistolary *parrêsia*.”⁵² In “the first recorded moment of Pauline interpretation by someone other than Paul himself,”⁵³ Paul relates his opponents’ charge: “His letters are weighty and strong, but the presence of his body is weak, and his spoken word (*logos*) is contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10). Paul even appears to corroborate that perception, admitting that he is “humble when face to face with” the Corinthians yet “bold” in his writing (2 Cor 10:1).

Biblical scholars have generally accepted this perceived dichotomy, proffering various explanations for why Paul’s embodied physical self differs so drastically from his disembodied epistolary self.⁵⁴ This approach to exegesis assumes that the *content* of Paul’s letters – abstract and immaterial recorded “thoughts” – are *entirely distinct from* the embodied Paul who conceives and composes them; the exegetical task is thus to “lead out” the immaterial contents of the corporeally absent Paul’s mind and heart (i.e., theological truth and/or his thoughts and desires). And yet, a strict divide between the (corporeal) Author Paul and the (disembodied) Epistolary Paul problematically presupposes the modern Cartesian dualisms mentioned earlier.

Jennifer Glancy’s *Corporal Knowledge* helpfully challenges the binaries implicit in the Bold Epistolary Paul/Weak Corporeal Paul distinction. Glancy appeals to ancient somatic reasoning, according to which the body constitutes a form of knowing,⁵⁵ in order to argue that passages like Paul’s “boasting of beatings” (2 Cor 11:22–25) do not present a Bold Epistolary Paul at all. Quite the opposite: “The debility of Paul’s somatic presentation” in the letters actually would have “*undermined* his claim to authority.”⁵⁶ Paul, then, makes a surprising rhetorical move when, instead of refuting the perception that his body is weak, he equates his physical infirmities with Jesus’. Glancy concludes, “By pointing to his own storytelling body, Paul claims his dubious corporal

51 Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16.

52 Ibid., 81.

53 Ibid., 80.

54 E.g., Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 52–53.

55 Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

56 Ibid., 44.

knowledge as a source of improbable power.”⁵⁷ “Corporal knowledge” admirably destabilizes normative assumptions regarding strength and weakness, bodies and words. And yet, even in Glancy’s nuanced discussion, the texts remain inert, passive objects.

A stable divide between a Bold Epistolary Paul and a Weak Corporeal Paul becomes even more problematic if we juxtapose it with another commonplace in Pauline scholarship, namely, the assumption that an epistle indicates absence, or lack, while the body represents presence and power. This view reverses the dichotomy, creating a *Bold* Corporeal Paul and a *Weak* Epistolary Paul. Scholars routinely note that letters constitute “an alternative form of social relationship, one which functions to establish or maintain a relationship when the parties to it cannot meet face-to-face.”⁵⁸ Paul also seems to support this assumption, assuring the Corinthians that, although “absent in body,” he is “present in spirit” (1 Cor 5:3), and referring repeatedly to upcoming visits (e.g., 2 Cor 12:14; 13:1). An epistle, from this perspective, constitutes a less appealing, less powerful stand-in for an absent Paul (Weak Epistolary Paul), in contrast to his (obviously preferable) physical presence (Bold Corporeal Paul).

Robert Funk’s widely-accepted thesis regarding Paul’s “apostolic *parousia*” illustrates this latter line of reasoning. Funk argues that Paul considered his apostolic presence “under three different but related aspects at once: the aspect of the letter, the apostolic emissary, and his own personal presence.”⁵⁹ Funk’s insistence that all three communication strategies – written letters, sent emissaries and physical presence – instantiate Paul’s apostolic *parousia* represents a useful corrective to those who consider presence *only* in terms of the physical body. Less helpful, however, is Funk’s concomitant claim that letters “may be *less* effective,” since they do not “bear the apostolic power to the same degree as Paul’s personal presence.”⁶⁰ Mitchell rightly argues contra Funk that this evaluative hierarchy (Paul-envoy-letter) is unnecessary and improbable; it is more likely that Paul evaluated circumstances individually, and sometimes decided an emissary or letter would be *more* effective than bodily presence.⁶¹

57 Ibid., 26.

58 Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 53.

59 Robert Funk, “The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. William R. Farmer, Charles F. D. Moule and Richard R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249.

60 Ibid., 259.

61 Margaret M. Mitchell, “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 642. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3267437>.

The question remains: Which is it? Is the Epistolary Paul bold and powerful or absent and thus less effective? Alternatively, is the Corporeal Paul weak and contemptible or physically present and thus more powerful? In my view, the questions thus posed presuppose modern text-related dichotomies (e.g., presence/absence, mind/body, written/spoken, etc.) that do not adequately reflect the nuances of ancient views about bodies, texts or agency.

Dale Martin's now-classic work, *The Corinthian Body*, demonstrates in detail that "categories and dichotomies that have shaped modern conceptions of the body for the past few centuries [...] *did not exist in the ancient world as dichotomies*."⁶² What would happen if we questioned modern conceptions of texts and agency, as well, and approached texts themselves as active agents? How would that change our approach to textual meaning vis-à-vis 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For one thing, it would expand our conceptualizations of and judgments about the ways in which the (Bold or Weak) Epistolary Paul functions. Consider ancient treatments of the rhetorical technique of *ekphrasis*, for example. *Ekphrasis* is based on the view that words have the power to conjure images in the mind's eye.⁶³ Robyn Whitaker summarizes the ancient view: "Ekphrasis seeks to do the impossible: to use what is unseen to produce something seen, thus creating a visual representation through the medium of language."⁶⁴ 1 and 2 Corinthians make the apostle legible and thereby "do the impossible": They produce a *re*-presentation of Paul that is made of words but is also, in a sense, more than words.

Notions of *ekphrasis* add a level of tangibility to Mitchell's reframing of Paul's dispute with his opponents. She casts the discrepancy between the Epistolary Paul and the Corporeal Paul in terms of competing verbal *portraits*: "Paul ensures his testimonial against [the Corinthians'] apparently misconstrued authorial intent by painting a retrospective self-portrait – of himself as letter writer, composing the controversial missive with tears streaming down his face."⁶⁵

In short, for Mitchell, Paul's letters present a "verbal self-portrait."⁶⁶ Although Mitchell does not nuance her discussion in this way, reading Paul's epistolary

62 Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 3.

63 See, e.g., Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 62–84 and citations therein.

64 Robyn J. Whitaker, *Ekphrasis, Vision, and Persuasion in the Book of Revelation*, WUNT 2/410 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 15.

65 Mitchell, *Paul*, 102.

66 Ibid., 81.

“self-portrait” in light of ancient theories of language like *ekphrasis* facilitates a shift in our understanding of the text as an active agent.

The first-century rhetorician Theon defines *ekphrasis* as “a descriptive (*periēgēmatikos*) speech (*logos*), which leads (*agōn*) the thing shown vividly before the eyes” (*Prog.* 11). It is not insignificant that Theon casts the *logos* – not the author or audience – as the active subject who does the “leading” (*agōn*). What is more, the adjective *periēgēmatikos*, typically translated “descriptive,” is related to *periēgesthai*, which suggests that the *logos* is leading around a space, much like Pausanias’ famous travel guide of Greece, *Hellados Periegesis*. Paul’s letters represent more than merely corporeal absence; they also “lead” Paul “vividly before the eyes” of the Corinthians. As such, the Pauline epistles function as their own dynamic form of embodiment, a complex and different manifestation of Pauline presence. In this sense, the Corinthian letters become “a correspondence course” not just in “tactical,” but in what we might call *tactile* hermeneutics.⁶⁷

Before delving any further, let me forestall two potential misunderstandings. First, my argument is not that Paul *intentionally* drew on rhetorical handbooks and treatises, nor that he *consciously* used ekphrastic language. I merely wish to demonstrate that approaching 1 and 2 Corinthians as active textual agents is entirely plausible in light of ancient conceptions of language and imagery. Ancient views about the powers and abilities of language – like *ekphrasis*, but not limited to it – commend textual agency and, by extension, intersubjectivity as useful concepts for approaching biblical texts. Textual agency was not a foreign concept in the ancient world.

This leads directly to the second potential misunderstanding. When I speak of textual agency, I do not mean to advance what Martin describes as the “myth of textual agency” – i.e., the “common assumption” that “the Bible ‘speaks’ and our job is just to ‘listen.’”⁶⁸ As should be clear from my discussion of Pinnock et al. above, I agree with Martin that texts “must be interpreted by human beings” and that readers are ethically accountable for their active role in interpretive meaning-making. My concern here is with ancient conceptualizations, according to which texts do have a kind of agency.

67 Ibid., 16.

68 Dale B. Martin, “Introduction: The Myth of Textual Agency,” in *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 1.

Indeed, for much of antiquity, writing was construed as a magical practice imbued with numinous power.⁶⁹ Texts – written words – could easily be active agents, with a kind of supernatural or magical ability to engender real, material effects in the world. Joshua Englehardt and Dimitri Nakassis, for example, discuss how inscriptions in antiquity could “impose their will upon readers [...], neatly reversing our ‘commonsense’ expectation of an active human subject and a passive material object.”⁷⁰ Nonhuman things could have their own transformative capacities; they had what sociologists today refer to as “material agency,” or the capacity of material things to make a difference and create change.⁷¹ For our purposes, textual agency highlights the extent to which texts, especially in the ancient *Weltanschauung*, remained out of human control, producing effects and creating changes that exceed human intentionality or rationality.

Conceiving of Paul's letters as textual agents thus makes sense of another apparent discrepancy in 1 and 2 Corinthians: Paul's own conflicting claims about the letters. On the one hand, Paul repeatedly declares that his words have power and efficacy. Insisting that he is more than the Lord's legal stenographer, Paul tells the Corinthians, “What I am writing to you is a command of the Lord” (1 Cor 14:37). He implies that his letters can create change: “*I write* these things while I am away from you, *so that* when I come, I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me [...]” (2 Cor 13:10). On the other hand, Paul admits that he cannot control the letters; they might not work in the ways that he hopes. For example, directly after equating his writing with the Lord's command, Paul recognizes that it might not be received as such: “Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized” (1 Cor 14:38). Elsewhere, Paul's concern that his return to Corinth will be marked by mutual disappointment betrays an awareness that the letters might fail to engender the change he desires: “For I fear that when I come, I may find you not as I wish

69 On the “the numinous power of writing” in antiquity, see, e.g., William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 24–34.

70 Joshua Englehardt and Dimitri Nakassis, “Introduction: Individual Intentionality, Social Structure, and Material Agency in Early Writing and Emerging Script Technologies,” in *Agency in Ancient Writing*, ed. Joshua Englehardt (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 8. See, similarly, Irene J. Winter's work on inscribed monuments. E.g., “Agency Marked, Agency Ascribed: The Affective Object in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, CHANE 34/4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 2: 307–331.

71 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), esp. 14.

[...]” (2 Cor 12:20). Paul’s ambivalence about his letters’ efficacy makes sense if texts, too, have powers to do things.

4 Between Intention and Reception: Concluding Thoughts

This chapter began with the observation that exegesis as traditionally conceived considers textual meaning to be the result of an acting subject (God, author, reader or biblical critic) and a passive object (text or reader). I argued that this view of exegesis is predicated upon modern assumptions of objectivity and agency that ancient people did not share.

I proposed, alternatively, that we approach textual meaning through the lens of intersubjective *diēgēsis* – that is, a fluid, mutually constitutive interaction between multiple active subjects. If a text can “lead,” but not absolutely, and if a text’s readers also can “lead,” but not absolutely, then the precariousness of dialogic exchange – the “leading between” of *dia* + *hēgeomai* (*diēgeomai*) – is best conceived as instantiated in the unpredictable, intersubjective space between texts and readers.

Actively resisting modern binaries in this way does better justice to the transformative potential of the “subjective in-between” that exists between texts and readers. More specifically, embracing this paradoxical “both/and” approach to textual meaning creates space for thinking differently about Paul’s letters. Exegetical interpretations of Paul’s Corinthian correspondence tend to approach them as the persuasive or ineffective, but ultimately passive, words of a corporeally absent apostle. However, this pits Paul’s epistolary voice *over and against* his physical body, effectively reinscribing the accusation of Paul’s opponents. Approaching 1 and 2 Corinthians as active agents in their own right allows us to hold in tension multiple complexities: both mind and matter, both signified absence and embodied presence, both inanimate written manuscripts and autonomous subjectivities, both powerful and weak, both anticipated and unpredictable, both intention and reception. “Exegesis without authorial intent?” becomes intersubjective *diēgēsis* – both with authorial intention and without it.

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Born-Again Bibles: Biblical Studies after the “Death of the Author”

Hannah M. Strømmen

It is not new to announce the movement of meaning beyond any fixed anchoring in authorial intention. As Jacques Derrida describes it in the now classic “Signature Event Context”:

For writing to be a writing it must continue to “act” and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed, be it because of temporary absence, because he is dead or, more generally, because he has not employed his absolutely actual and present intention or attention, the plenitude of his desire to say what he means, in order to sustain what seems to be written “in his name.”¹

John Barton calls this current state of affairs the banishment of the expression “really means” “to outer darkness.”² An anxiety is expressed here that what postmodernists and poststructuralists have set in motion is sheer anarchy. Texts fall apart, the center cannot hold, to adapt William B. Yeats’ famous line from “The Second Coming.” In this center-less notion of textuality, a text might be described as “an effect of traces” marked by a ghostly logic of “living on.”³ Contexts do not disappear, but as Derrida puts it, there “are only contexts without any centering or absolute anchoring.”⁴ The fear about the center not holding, which reverberates in Barton’s words, is that meaning will overflow, resulting in a chaotic onslaught of never-ending signification darting in all directions.

1 Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7.

2 John Barton, “Historical-Critical Approaches,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17, doi: 10.1017/CCOL0521481449.

3 Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida*, Routledge Critical Thinkers (London: Routledge, 2003), 64.

4 Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 9.

As if in agreement with this fear, the epilogue to John's Revelation is a testament to an anxiety about what happens to a text after the author is no longer there:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Revelation 22:18–19

Knowing that others can add or take away from his words, the author foregrounds in this ending the potentially veering trajectory of signifiers in the world to come.⁵ Michael Naas emphasizes the testamentary nature of writing as it is directed towards a future beyond the addressor. It abides in an uncertainty, "a living on that is always to be determined."⁶

Rewinding to the first chapters of John's Revelation we might ask: Who are John's letters for? The addressees might be said to be the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea; but are the letters not always already caught in a future structure beyond such addressees? Or, at risk of not reaching their addressees at all, if someone does indeed tamper with the words of this book? Are we not also its addressees? Can we read these letters, or the whole book of Revelation, without adding anything or taking something away? Derrida argues that "every reading is not only anachronistic, but consists in bringing out anachrony, non-self-contemporaneity, dislocation in the taking-place of the text."⁷ What happens to a text when the author is no longer present? What, indeed, happens to biblical scholarship after the "death of the author"?

In what follows, I will address the "containment" of meaning in relation to questions of authorship (or lack of authorship) in biblical studies, and more particularly to biblical reception history. First, I will revisit briefly Roland Barthes' and Michel Foucault's critiques of the author figure to draw out what

5 I discuss this further in relation to concepts of religious experience in "Fiercely Proselytizing and Feverishly Protective: Reading John's Revelation with Jacques Derrida," in *Religious Experience Revisited: Expressing the Inexpressible?* ed. Thomas Hardtke, Ulrich Schmiedel and Tobias Tan (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

6 Michael Naas, *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 4.

7 Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, The Seminars of Jacques Derrida* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 2: 8.

I see as the implications for biblical studies. Second, I will outline the recent argument made by Brennan Breed about rethinking biblical studies after the “death of the author.” I will argue that what Breed misses in his rethinking of biblical studies is an attention to the way biblical scholarship as reception history can more radically counter “containments” or “closures” of writing. Third, building on Breed, I will discuss the inherent veering movement of the Bible – or rather, bibles. Taken seriously, the implications of these veering bibles are such that biblical studies becomes a specifically *outward-facing* intellectual endeavor that takes into account ongoing meaning-making with an approach that is supplementary to and symbiotic with other academic disciplines.

1 The Principle of Thrift in the Proliferation of Meaning

As is well known, Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” from 1967 argues that the study of literature is “tyrannically centered on the author.”⁸ Explaining a particular literary work is done through the man or woman who produces it, as if the author is confiding in us, and the confession is his or her work. Barthes suggests, however, that

[l]inguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a “subject,” not a “person,” and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language “hold together,” suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it.⁹

Turning to the simile of father and child, Barthes describes the way the book and author are perceived as making up a single line of before and after, originator and product.¹⁰ But a text, he writes, is “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture.”¹¹ It suits criticism well, however, to “close the writing” by imposing a limit on the text, that is, on the author.¹² Barthes’ essay has proved to be, as Andrew Bennett affirms, “a revolutionary critique of conventional conceptions of authorship and

8 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 143.

9 *Ibid.*, 145.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*, 146.

12 *Ibid.*, 147.

interpretation,” and moreover of authority itself.¹³ The text is decentered. Texts are marked by a “radical intertextuality without origin.”¹⁴ Barthes concludes “The Death of the Author” by drawing attention to the reader, rather than the author. The multiple meanings of a text, “drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation,” are focused in the reader.¹⁵ Textual unity lies not in an elusive and fictional origin but in its destination.¹⁶ The “birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.”¹⁷

In his lecture “What Is an Author?” just a few years later in 1969, Michel Foucault suggested similarly that the author is “the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning.”¹⁸ He argues that the author is “a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction.”¹⁹ The author “is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.”²⁰ The name of the author is unlike other proper names in that the authorial name plays a certain role in characterizing a discourse; it delineates the “proper” limits of the text, thereby determining its mode of being.²¹ In recognition of this ideological device, however, it is not enough simply to “get rid” of the concept of the author. According to Foucault, we “must locate the space left empty by the author’s disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers.”²² It is time, he suggests, to study discourses in terms of their

13 Andrew Bennett, *The Author*, The New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 2004), 13.

14 Ibid., 16.

15 Barthes, “Death of the Author,” 148.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. Bennett suggests that in this move Barthes reinstates a center, succumbing to a “closure” of the text by hemming in the subjectivity of a reader; cf. Bennett, *Author*, 18.

18 Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Essential Works by Foucault (New York: The New Press, 1998), 221. While there is this similarity with Barthes – Foucault takes Barthes’ essay as his premise – Foucault argues that the disappearance of the writing subject is a continuous process that requires analysis; see also Bennett, *Author*, 20.

19 Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 221.

20 Ibid., 222.

21 Ibid., 211. Influenced by Jerome and his four criteria for authenticity for determining if several texts have one and the same author, Foucault argues that modern literary criticism continues to assume a constant level of value, a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence, stylistic unity and a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events. Ibid., 214–215.

22 Ibid., 209.

“modes of existence.”²³ Questions that ought to be asked as a result include: Where have discourses been used, how do texts circulate, and in what ways are they appropriated?²⁴ In short, what are the modes of existence of a discourse?

Traditionally, a central task of the biblical scholar has revolved around the question of authorship.²⁵ What happens to the biblical scholar if the “author” figure is eliminated? Who or what takes its place? Barthes and Foucault’s critique points us in the direction of *reception history*. Reception history is preoccupied precisely with readers and their uses and understandings of biblical texts, expanding meaning-making beyond the figure of the author and beyond notions of the primacy of an original context; it is about the various modes of existence of a text in different times and places, both in terms of the physical form a text takes and its status, role and significance. If biblical studies follow what Barthes and Foucault set in motion, then a shift takes place from searching for an authorial origin and anchor for meaning to tracing the constructions of meaning in interpretations of texts, charting the different modes of a text and the spaces it inhabits as it is copied, distributed, circulated and appropriated.

2 Objectives and Objectiles in Biblical Studies

In *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* from 2014, Brennan Breed suggests that biblical scholarship needs to break down the divide between biblical studies as exegesis and biblical reception history, dissolving the distinction that this divide is founded upon, namely, the distinction between origin and reception. While Breed’s theoretical focus is not only on the role of the author in such a distinction, it is clear that his argument is heavily indebted to the debates Barthes and Foucault so successfully set in motion. The biblical text, he argues throughout the book, is always already a series of processes whose nature it is to change and to be changeable, underdetermined and undeterminable, even in its so-called original context. Rather than reception dealing with the “after effects” of a biblical text, its later lives, all biblical scholars are in this sense in the reception business.

Breed discusses the way the reader necessarily reorganizes the text being read in order to produce an interpretation that substitutes some words in the

23 Ibid., 220.

24 Ibid., 222.

25 Of course, the notion of authorship in biblical studies has taken many different forms. See Oda Wischmeyer’s contribution to this volume for further discussion.

text for others; in this sense the reader becomes an author.²⁶ But conversely, “the author surely became his or her own reader during the writing process.”²⁷ The way to think of the author as “the one who holds meaning,” he concludes, is “as a structurally open space, able to be occupied by any reader who may try to make sense of the text.”²⁸ The author, then, is resurrected, but this “author” looks decidedly different than before.

Following Gilles Deleuze, Breed quips that biblical texts are not objects but objectiles, and must be studied as things “for which movement and variation is a necessary quality.”²⁹ Breed calls for a scholarly practice that takes account not of the essentialist traits of a text but of its “mannerisms,” that is, the capacities of a text – what it does or can do.³⁰ Meaning is not “a definite property” of particular words, phrases or texts, but a “set of relations.”³¹ Too often biblical scholars ask;

“What is the essential textual form of this biblical text? How *should* this text look? How *should* it be read? What *does* it mean?” Instead, we should think in terms of a text’s potential. What *can* it look like? What *can* it do? The point of biblical scholarship is not containment. It is knowledge – to know what a biblical text *is*. And the only way to know what it *is* is to see it in many different contexts doing many different things. Reception history asks precisely these questions.³²

The point Breed makes about containment is noteworthy. It could be said to flow directly from the critiques of authorship that Barthes and Foucault made in the late 1960s. Rather than maintain a hierarchy between a text’s original state and later interpretation, we should turn, he argues, to a recognition that a “first” context is not inherently more important or determined than any later stage of a text’s signification and significance. In other words, by ceasing to privilege a particular conception of “original” context to which the authorial authority is tied, Breed allows the biblical text to “be” according to what

26 Brennan Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History*, ISBL (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 113.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 116–117.

30 Ibid., 117.

31 Ibid., 111.

32 Ibid., 117.

“mannerisms” it demonstrates in a variety of contexts, none of which bear any privileged authority.³³

However, while Breed posits that “*drift is an essential characteristic of text itself*,”³⁴ his own concluding reception history of Job does not drift very far. His outline of Job 19:25–27 does not *contain* meaning, but it remains somewhat caught in the few verses under discussion, drawing interpreter-interlocutors into the orbit of this textual snippet. Breed takes as his starting point Job 19:25–27 and characterizes what he calls “semantic nodes” that make up three interpretive trajectories from these verses: survival, presence and justice. From these verses he discusses manuscripts and readers of Job which map onto these trajectories. I argue that what Breed misses is the potential for biblical reception history *after* the “containing” functions of the author to become a much more *outward-facing* academic endeavor. Breed’s focus on the text could still be said to assume the stability of some “original” text to be studied in the first place, rather than supporting the idea that any text is “produced” by the communities and individuals that read it or determined by the particular manuscript or version of the text as it is circulated and reproduced. Building on the ideas of supplement and symbiosis, I will go on to sketch what I see as the benefits for biblical studies after the “death of the author.”

3 Biblical Studies as Supplement and Symbiosis

Breed’s reading of Job 19:25–27 opens up multiple meanings of Job, but the center of gravity rests with the parsimonious few verses he presents; the biblical text is the primary center, while individual interpreters and interpretive trends orbit temporarily around the biblical text. There is nothing wrong with Breed’s approach, and it is not of course that *all* of biblical studies has to function in the way I will outline. But my suggestion is that biblical scholarship can play a very different role in taking account of the veering movements of texts, in shifting gravitationally, turning outwards and functioning as a supplementary

33 While Breed wants to move away from notions of “misreading” or “wrong” readings, he does not suggest a text can mean *anything*; part of the work of reception history is also to identify “points at which the text seems to ‘tear’ or ‘suture’ in a way that alters its identity” (following Roman Jakobsen, Breed speaks of “transmutations”). But there is no pure, “original” identity or fixed essence of a text (such as authorial intention); *ibid.*, 137. How one would go about deciding what constitutes a “tear” or “suture” is perhaps less clear. Trying to decide what the proper “identity” of the text is would surely risk falling back into an essentialized notion of what a text *is*.

34 *Ibid.*, 109. Emphasis original.

discipline. Perhaps the problem with Breed's account of biblical studies as nomadic, and texts as drifting, is that it leaves biblical studies itself in a stagnating state, with no need to change, because – as he argues – it is always already concerned with reception history. If biblical studies has always dealt in the reception business – albeit unwittingly, at least in terms of self-identification – then Breed's study might as well be saying that biblical studies can rest on its laurels and simply accept a nominal change (in terms of the divide between exegetes and reception historians), without altering the discipline and its mainstream practices. Taking the idea of the movement of texts seriously, however, might lead to a somewhat altered notion of biblical studies. I will attempt to show this by invoking the notion of “veering,” before turning to the proposition of biblical studies as supplementary and symbiotic.

Biblical texts and their effects are near-ubiquitous; the modes of being of biblical texts vary radically and, as Breed affirms, their meanings will continue to veer. Literary critic Nicholas Royle highlights the term “veering” in his eponymous title from 2012. The word “veering,” as Royle explains, refers to a movement that can be intentional or unintentional. “Veering” does not necessarily depend on any logic of origin or destination or on human agency:³⁵ “[I]t is an uncertainly perverse, unfinished movement in the present. Veering, then, entails an experience or event of difference, of untapped and unpredictable energy. Veering back, round, down, up, towards, about, over, away, off: it might go anywhere.”³⁶ A biblical text might be said precisely to veer. A text is not first and foremost a static product, crafted by its maker and locked within a particular place and time, and only *afterwards* given to interpretive flux. It is from the beginning a discursive movement – veering in and between different times and places. The very “nature” of a biblical text lies in its veering movement. The meanings of a text veer, according to the modes of existence in which a text finds itself, and therefore veering is also tied to interpretive activity. Interpretations of biblical texts veer. The role of the biblical scholar is to grapple with this veering movement. Central to such a critical activity is to pay heed to the intentional *and* the unintentional uses of biblical texts. Veering, Royle writes, “can be awkward, inadvertent, clumsy; but it can also be beautiful, graceful, canny.”³⁷

35 See also Peter Clar's use of “productivity” in his contribution to this volume, 61, which also works without the agency of a subject.

36 Nicholas Royle, *Veering: A Theory of Literature*, The Frontiers of Theory (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 5.

37 *Ibid.*, 4.

What I am signaling with Royle's use of the term "veering" is the way in which a text and its meanings might be thought of as veering, not as an accident or perversion of the original text, but as always already deliberately or unintentionally turning, subverting, seducing, swerving. The veering, then, is not secondary but primary – it is the "nature" of the text. Moreover, the term, as I am using it, is also inextricably related to what is done with a biblical text, so that the text and its capacities are not separated or separable. Every reading is a swerving, or a perversion, a twisting and deviating, or a turning, a seduction. As Royle suggests, veering "impels us to think afresh and otherwise about the borders or opposition between interior/exterior³⁸ or inner/outer."³⁹ Whether the author likes it or not, John's Revelation will never be immune from the adding to or taking away (veering) from what has become the last book of the Christian Bible. The "principle of thrift" Foucault and Barthes identify can be followed by what I call a principle of extravagance: Biblical meanings proliferate. The meanings of the Bible – as well as the idea of "the Bible" – need to be studied as particular sets of relations in multiple, never (over)determined contexts.⁴⁰

Returning to Breed and the stagnancy of Job 19:25–27, then, I suggest that rather than begin with a particular biblical text, biblical scholars can turn outwards to disciplines such as history, cultural studies, politics and philosophy as starting points for a particular reading. For such cooperation, it is not necessary to start from scratch. For instance, by examining theological and philosophical debates in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in England and Germany, Jonathan Sheehan has persuasively shown that the Enlightenment period produced a dominant conception of the Bible as an icon of cultural heritage that he calls the "Cultural Bible" – a conception that is still highly relevant today.⁴¹ He shows that a "Bible" was produced that could be reinvested with *cultural* authority at a time when its theological status was questioned. Similarly, Yvonne Sherwood has shown that seventeenth-century English politics was inextricably caught up in readings of particular biblical texts, thus demonstrating the

38 Also Deleuze questions the binary opposition between interior and exterior, as Stephen D. Moore shows in his contribution to this volume, 111.

39 Ibid., 7.

40 One consequence of such research might be to encourage more project-driven work rather than single-author monographs. It may also bring Hebrew Bible and New Testament scholars together, or muddle this divide altogether, as the divide is not necessarily reflected in the ways bibles are constructed, conceptualized and treated outside specifically religious contexts and academic study of the Bible.

41 Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

different “bibles” at play and the competing productions of meaning in that context.⁴² There is, arguably, no pre-existing “Bible” or “biblical text,” only periods with particular (veering) bibles, histories of reading, interpretive trends and fluid, flexible incarnations of bibles embedded in larger contexts.⁴³

As Foucault suggests, it is a matter of critical importance to note the ways in which the “modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each.”⁴⁴ The idea of the “author” may still be important, but perhaps predominantly insofar as the name of the author is invoked in competing claims over the authenticity, ownership and legitimacy of a text and its meanings. The so-called “original” context of a text is not expelled as irrelevant or uninteresting, but nor is it given a primary position as the ultimate container of meaning.⁴⁵

Biblical studies as I am describing it, then, is *supplementary* to the disciplines that inform knowledge of, for example, the Enlightenment period in Europe or seventeenth-century English politics. But it is not supplementary in the sense that it means *merely* “extra” or “superfluous.” Derrida’s notion of supplement can explain the way biblical studies can be both “outside” the field it informs, as something “extra,” but also how it “makes up for something missing.”⁴⁶ As Derrida puts it in *Of Grammatology*, the supplement marks a certain kind of emptiness.⁴⁷ Relating *supplement* to the French verb *suppléer*, which means “to add what is missing, to supply a necessary surplus,” he demonstrates the logic of the supplement not as *after* or *in addition to* but as always already part of the “center” or “main.”⁴⁸ The supplement is parasitical in the sense that it feeds off another intellectual body, but it also alters and affects

42 See Yvonne Sherwood, *Biblical Blaspheming: Trials of the Sacred for a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Sherwood analyzes what she identifies as the Absolute-Monarchist Bible, the Radical Bible and the Liberal Bible, and shows how the Liberal Bible eventually became the dominant understanding of Scripture in modern liberal democracies.

43 See also Deleuze/Guattari’s notion of “assemblage,” explained in Stephen D. Moore’s contribution to this volume, 110.

44 Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 220.

45 For a critique of the “container model of communication” based on Deleuze, see Stephen D. Moore, in this volume, 115; for a critique of the original context, as especially relevant for interpretation based on Derrida’s “iterability,” see Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 127–129.

46 Royle, *Derrida*, 48.

47 Jacques Derrida, “... That Dangerous Supplement ...,” in *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 144–145.

48 Derrida discusses the supplement with regard to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in relation to what is conceived of as nature or the natural and what is necessarily or accidentally *added on*, supplemented. This forms part of his argument against the privileging of speech as a privileged presence and writing as its faulty other. See *ibid.*, 141–164.

that very body.⁴⁹ Rather than parasitical, perhaps, the supplement could be said to be symbiotic: It *lives with* but (in the nature of the supplement) is never fully incorporated into the “inside.”⁵⁰ Hugh Pyper makes a similar point when he calls biblical studies a “unique resource for that much touted but less enacted aspiration, interdisciplinarity.”⁵¹ As he argues, the advantage of biblical studies is that it is not defined by any one methodology or language or line of inquiry but by a text, “a text which just happens to be the most widely distributed in the world and one which has one of the longest, unbroken, best documented and most various traditions of reception.”⁵² We might add that it is not even defined by *a* text, but by the multiple and veering versions, productions and reproductions of a set of texts collected under the name “Bible.” Existing in a symbiotic relationship with other disciplines, biblical studies can be beneficial – in a broadly interdisciplinary sense – in identifying, analyzing and evaluating the ways Bibles are saturated in culture, functioning as a palimpsest of Western culture in ways that need to be uncovered. In this way, the knowledge of biblical scholarship amassed over the centuries becomes a crucial archive, not only for the biblical studies guild, but for academia as a whole.⁵³

What of Barton’s anxiety about the anarchy of meaning, then? How do we “police” meanings that are unpalatable, such as interpretations of biblical texts used to justify violence? Is the testament to the veering movement of the Bible a concession to relativism that, at its worst, *allows for* the worst kinds of meaning-making and the impossibility of criticism and correction? Arguably, the hope that we can somehow put the genie back into the bottle, cram biblical

49 This is a way of understanding “deconstruction” in Royle’s playful definition as “what remains to be thought: a logic of destabilization always already on the move in ‘things themselves’: what makes every identity at once itself and different from itself: a logic of spectrality: a theoretical and practical parasitism or virology”; Royle, *Derrida*, 24.

50 This point about the “outside” nature of biblical studies as supplement is important to its maintaining a critical function.

51 Hugh Pyper, *The Unchained Bible: Cultural Appropriations of Biblical Texts*, LHBOTS 567 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 178.

52 Ibid.

53 John Lyons and Emma England make a similar point when they write that “[r]eception history pushes the boundaries of biblical studies by actively working with alternative subject areas and in many instances using methods from outside of the traditional arenas of the discipline.” Emma England and William John Lyons, “Explorations in the Reception of the Bible,” in *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice*, LHBOTS 6 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 10. I suggest the move can be far more radical. Biblical scholars have always brought “outside” methodologies and theories into biblical studies; it is rather a matter of flipping this around and using biblical studies as a field of knowledge that can supplement other disciplines, fields, areas of research.

signification back into a “rightful” mould of an original context, is impossible, even if it were – and I do not think it is – desirable.⁵⁴ The only possibility of a responsible critique, then, is to confront the veering movements of Bibles, to expose them as *particular* and *contingent* bibles (and decapitalizing “Bible” here might be key), rather than *the* Bible. The authority of particular bibles is thus diminished but taken seriously as an individual or community’s (sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious) understanding and use of the Bible. In this way, the continuities, as well as the ruptures, in respect to how “the Bible” is incarnated, invoked, interpreted, can be appreciated and can be of service to the understanding of diverse issues – such as constructions of national identity, cultural trends, religious and political rhetoric and traditions.

4 The Principle of Extravagance

In terms of the consequences of this discussion for biblical studies, we might recall Foucault’s warning note that the author as a limiting device can easily be replaced by other devices intended to curb and control the proliferation of meaning. Although reception history is nothing new in biblical studies, there are glimpses of a renewed attention to the cultural histories of the Bible. But there is a tendency to engage predominantly with biblical texts in relation to literature, films and art rather than, for instance, law and politics.⁵⁵ A “certain conservatism and telling omissions”⁵⁶ mark the field. The Bible is perceived as *naturally* allied to high culture and figures of national genius.⁵⁷ Another “containing” tendency (as we might call it) is to focus on writers who explicitly reference the Bible, who have an explicit Christian or Jewish affiliation,⁵⁸ and to avoid modern and contemporary contexts. This is just another way of “closing down writing” or of marking off the edges of textual signification, while implicitly disavowing the necessity for biblical reception history, in order to

54 A. K. M. Adam makes a similar point in his contribution to this volume, 205: “Interpreters who so adjust their sense of their own importance as arbiters of valid interpretation will at the same time be better attuned to the role that they manifestly play in a world that cares little what they think.”

55 Sherwood, *Blaspheming*, 321.

56 *Ibid.*, 275.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

engage more democratically in areas of culture and politics that are not obviously “biblical,” canonical or recognizably biblically “literate.”⁵⁹

If Barthes and Foucault’s critique of the author-function has taught us something about containment policies in regard to (the proliferation of) meaning, then what biblical reception history can do is to demonstrate how biblical texts are continuously produced in and by different contexts, as well as informing and influencing these contexts through their veering nature. Is this, strictly speaking, still “reception history”? Or is it production history? Furthermore, is this essentially what “biblical studies” *is* rather than a sub-section relegated to the margins of biblical studies proper (“biblical studies on holiday,” as Susan Gillingham put it⁶⁰)?⁶¹ As a supplementary and symbiotic intellectual endeavor, biblical scholarship of this kind becomes a way of shedding light not only on the mode of a text in a particular space and time, but also on multiple discourses and contexts outside biblical studies. Biblical studies can in this way be a thoroughly outward-facing discipline that supplements other areas and disciplines in essential and exciting ways. It is perhaps high time, then, to replace fear of the proliferation of meaning with exhilaration.

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59 For instance, in my current work on the uses of the Bible – and assumptions about what the “Bible” is – in the Far Right, one of the key figures, Anders Behring Breivik, is not frequently recognized as a Christian, and he would certainly not be easily recognizable as biblically literate. And yet assumptions about the Bible, biblical interpretation and the power of particular verses form a crucial component to ensure that the ideological machinery of which he is a part functions.

60 Susan Gillingham, “Biblical Studies on Holiday? A Personal View of Reception History,” in *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice*, ed. Emma England and William J. Lyons, LHBOTS 6 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 179.

61 Again, this is not to say, of course, that what I am describing is the *only* form of biblical studies – only to argue that it should be fully integrated into what the discipline is, along with other methods, theories and interpretive practices.

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A Bible That Expresses Everything While Communicating Nothing: Deleuze and Guattari's Cure for Interpretosis

Stephen D. Moore

“[P]erhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian,” Michel Foucault once wrote.¹ Foucault may have had the century wrong. Just as he and Jacques Derrida were the towering theoretical eminences of the latter decades of the twentieth century, so has Deleuze been the thinker who has most galvanized theory thus far in the twenty-first century.² The reasons for this are complex, but prominent among them is the fact that affect theory has been the most impactful theoretical phenomenon of the current century thus far, and Deleuze is the most influential resource for affect theory.³

- 1 Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 165.
- 2 The literature on Deleuze beggars footnoting by now. As an index of the number of fields that Deleuze's work impacts, see Edinburgh University Press's Deleuze Connections series, currently at twenty-eight volumes: *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, *Deleuze and Literature*, *Deleuze and Music*, *Deleuze and Space*, *Deleuze and the Social*, *Deleuze and Philosophy*, *Deleuze and Politics*, *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, *Deleuze and History*, *Deleuze and New Technology*, *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, *Deleuze and Ethics*, *Deleuze and Film*, *Deleuze and Law*, *Deleuze and Race*, *Deleuze and Architecture*, *Deleuze and the Animal*.... More than a dozen books on Deleuze and religion, including theology, have appeared. There has been relatively little engagement with Deleuze among biblical scholars to date, but see Bradley H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 268–301; Brennan W. Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Reception History*, 1SBL (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), especially 116–206; Caroline Vander Stichele, “The Head of John and Its Reception or How to Conceptualize ‘Reception History,’” in *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice*, ed. Emma England and William John Lyons, LHBOTS 6 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 79–94; periodic forays in George Aichele's writings, such as much of his *Simulating Jesus: Reality Effects in the Gospels*, Bible World (London: Equinox, 2011) and his *Tales of Posthumanity: The Bible and Contemporary Popular Culture*, The Bible in the Modern World 65 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 45–51; and my own *Gospel Jesuses and Other Nonhumans: Biblical Criticism Post-Poststructuralism*, SemeiaSt 89 (Atlanta: SBL, 2017).
- 3 Deleuzian affect explicitly permeates much of Ticineto Clough's pivotal collection, *The Affective Turn*, for example, while it implicitly permeates Seigworth and Gregg's introduction

Affect theory in the Anglophone world has been notably uninterested in literature, by and large, including Deleuze-driven affect theory. Deleuze himself, however, had a significant, if complex, relationship with literature. On the one hand, literature “is everywhere present in [Deleuze’s] work.”⁴ On the other hand, Deleuze did not aspire to *interpret* literature, hence the originality of his engagement with literary texts – and the perplexity of the challenge he poses for biblical interpreters. For Deleuze *did* read literature, and even read it closely. But how does one read closely and critically *without* interpreting?

1 The Text Machine: A User’s Manual

As a philosopher of pure immanence, pitilessly hostile to transcendence in all its manifold guises, not least that of interiority, Deleuze is unsurprisingly unsympathetic to any depth hermeneutic predicated upon an interiorized concept of meaning. To interpret, for Deleuze – to excavate, dredge up or recover putatively lost or hidden meanings – is to make a fetish of the unseen, the opaque, the esoteric, the phantasm: in a word, of the *secret*. For Deleuze, interpretation is a theological obsession, the province of the priest.⁵ The compulsion to interpret is also a disease; Deleuze dubs it “interpretosis.”⁶

to their field-consolidating volume, *The Affect Theory Reader*. See Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–25. Deleuze is everywhere present even if nowhere named, for instance, in Seigworth and Gregg’s preliminary definition of affect: “[A]ffect is found in those intensities that pass body to body [...], in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds [...]. Affect [...] is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought [...]” (“An Inventory of Shimmers,” 1. Emphasis original). Meanwhile, affect theorists as prominent as Lauren Berlant, Brian Massumi, Jasbir Puar and Kathleen Stewart also work with concepts of affect that are essentially Deleuzian. Biblical-scholarly engagements with affect theory include Jennifer L. Koosed and Stephen D. Moore, eds., “Affect Theory and the Bible,” *BibInt* 22, no. 4 (2014), a thematic issue of seven articles; and Maia Kotrotsits, “How Things Feel: Biblical Studies, Affect Theory, and the (Im)personal,” *Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Interpretation* 1 (2016): 1–53, an exhaustive survey article.

4 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 142.

5 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 47; Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975–1995* (New York: Semiotext[e], 2007), 15.

6 Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 47.

Early on, Deleuze borrowed the concept of the “machine” from Félix Guattari to hone the edges of his anti-hermeneutic. The 1970 edition of Deleuze’s 1964 book *Proust and Signs* contains a five-chapter addition, a new Part 2, titled “The Literary Machine.” Introducing that machine, Deleuze states, “To the *logos* [...] whose meaning must be discovered in the whole and to which it belongs, is opposed the antilogos, machine and machinery whose meaning (anything you like) depends solely on its functioning.”⁷ What the literary machine functions to produce are effects – more precisely, “literary effects” that are analogous to “electric effects” or “electromagnetic effects.”⁸ Deleuze might equally have said that literature is a machine for producing *affects*. For literature or any other art form thus reconceived, there is “no problem of meaning, [...] only a problem of use.”⁹

From there it is but a short step to the anti-hermeneutic manifesto with which Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-book *A Thousand Plateaus* opens. “We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier,” they announce:

[W]e will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed [...]. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine [...]. [T]he only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work.¹⁰

This is not simply a restatement of the theory of intertextuality. The other machines into which the literary machine can be plugged are textual and non-textual, organic and nonorganic, discursive and nondiscursive, human and nonhuman. All of which is to say that “[l]iterature is an assemblage.”¹¹

What is an assemblage? It is an open-ended “multiplicity made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons [...] between them [...]”.

7 Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, Theory out of Bounds 17 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 146.

8 Ibid., 153.

9 Ibid., 146.

10 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4. The term “intensities,” for Deleuze and Guattari, is often a synonym for “affects.” In his “Notes on the Translation,” xvi, Brian Massumi defines affect as, among other things, “a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another.”

11 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

[T]he assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis."¹² As an assemblage, a book "is made of variously formed matters"¹³ – innumerable antecedent books, the writer's brain, processed wood pulp, electronic circuits, the laws of genre, discursive conventions, state censors, tenure and promotion committees, publishing houses and editorial boards, the reader's brain, communities of reception and so on.¹⁴ To attribute a book to an author-creator replete with interiority and resplendent with intentionality "is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements."¹⁵

Engaging with a literary text or any other text, for Deleuze, is never a case of embarking on a pilgrimage deep into the interior of the text in reverent search for some presumed reliquary of meaning deposited there by the author. It is rather a question of pursuing "lines of flight"¹⁶ into extra-textual practice. As Deleuze once remarked in a colloquium, "For me a text is merely a little wheel in an extra-textual practice. It is not a matter of commenting on the text through a method [...] of textual practice [...]; it is a matter of seeing what

12 Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 69. Deleuze adds elsewhere in an interview: "In assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs. The relations between the two are pretty complex" (*Two Regimes of Madness*, 177). The assemblage, first developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (see esp. 3–4, 88–90, 323–337, 503–505), has emerged as a highly fertile concept. Among the nine catalysts for what he takes to be a "nonhuman turn" in twenty-first century theory, Richard Grusin lists "The *assemblage theory* of Gilles Deleuze, Manuel DeLanda, Bruno Latour, and others" ("Introduction," in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard Grusin, Center for 21st Century Studies [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015], viii. Emphasis original). See also Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, Speculative Realism (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), which explicates and expands Deleuze and Guattari's version of the theory. Latour's assemblage theory is less obviously beholden to Deleuze and Guattari's; see his *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005). Assemblage theory is also an enabling resource for Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), a catalytic text for object-oriented new materialism, another manifestation of the "nonhuman turn." Assemblage theory has recently been taken up in biblical studies by Rhiannon Graybill; see her *Are We Not Men? Unstable Masculinity in the Hebrew Prophets* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 37–39, 121–142. It also features prominently in my own *Gospel Jesuses and Other Nonhumans*.

13 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3.

14 My attempted elaboration of Deleuze and Guattari's "a book is an assemblage" proposition (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 4) and the accompanying aphorism: "There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made."

15 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3.

16 An expression that recurs with obsessive frequency in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

use can be made of a text in the extra-textual practice that extends the text.”¹⁷ Deleuze rejected the panlinguism and hypertextualism of both structuralism and poststructuralism as encapsulated and perpetuated in such slogans as “The unconscious is structured like a language” (Lacan), “There is nothing outside the text” (Derrida), “The poetic text is produced in the complex movement of the simultaneous affirmation and negation of another text” (Kristeva), “It is language which speaks [...]: to write is to reach [...] that point where language alone acts” (Barthes).¹⁸ Deleuze was not fundamentally a philosopher of language,¹⁹ which is why he has always been a somewhat anomalous post-structuralist; but it is also why his work is attracting unprecedented attention in the post-poststructuralist moment in which theory now finds itself.

Deleuze was a philosopher of becoming, of affect, of sensation. He was a philosopher of flux. In consequence, when Deleuze explains, as he does above, that a text for him “is merely a little wheel in an extra-textual practice” and that he is principally interested in “seeing what use can be made of a text in the extra-textual practice that extends the text,” we should not imagine that we are being gently taken by the elbow and ushered back into a pre-theoretical world that is reassuringly solid and familiar and in which literary authors once again communicate their intentions commonsensically and successfully to their audiences. What the text effects, for Deleuze, how it functions, is considerably more complex than that.

The remainder of this essay endeavors to express that complexity. *Expression* is, indeed, the key concept here. Deleuze, or Deleuze and Guattari, have relatively little to say, all told, about how texts operate.²⁰ But they advance a theory of expression that is as comprehensive as it is revolutionary, and implicit in

17 Gilles Deleuze, “Discussion” following “Pensée nomade,” in *Nietzsche aujourd'hui*, ed. Bernard Pautrat and Maurice de Gandillac (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1973), 1: 186–187. My translation. Deleuze had been asked about the relationship of his textual practice to Derridean deconstruction.

18 Interestingly, it is hard to come up with a similar slogan for Foucault; and not coincidentally, it is Foucault that Deleuze most admired among his philosophical contemporaries. See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), a book in which Foucauldian thought and Deleuzian thought frequently form “a zone of indiscernibility,” as Deleuze himself might say.

19 He comes closest to being that in *The Logic of Sense*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

20 Texts in general, that is, as opposed to specific texts. Notable examples of their text-specific reading practice include, in addition to Deleuze's *Proust and Signs*, their jointly authored work *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), and Deleuze's solo-authored “On the Superiority of Anglo-American literature,” in *Dialogues 2*, Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 36–76. Deleuze also authored a notable essay on a biblical text, namely,

that theory of expression is a theory of the text. Deleuzoguattarian translator and commentator Brian Massumi²¹ has produced an incisive exposition of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of expression. In what follows, I will gloss Massumi glossing Deleuze and Guattari and attempt to relate what is said about expression in general to biblical expression in particular, that is, to the biblical text as an expressive machine.

2 On Biblical Expressions

What is expression? Introducing the collection, *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, Brian Massumi reflects:

Expression conjures up the image of a self-governing, reflective individual whose inner life can be conveyed at will to a public composed of similarly sovereign individuals – rational atoms of human experience in voluntary congregation, usefully sharing thoughts and experiences. In a word: “communication.” Communicational models of expression share many assumptions. These include the interiority of individual life, its rationality, an effective separation into private and public spheres, the voluntary nature of the collective bonds regulating that separation, the possibility of transparent transmission between privacies or between the private and the public, and the notion that what is transmitted is fundamentally information.²²

None of this would raise any biblical-scholarly eyebrows. When it comes to communing with biblical authors, most of us still labor in the shadow of Schleiermacher, for whom every act of understanding was but the obverse of

Revelation: “Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos,” in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (London: Verso, 1998), 36–52.

21 Massumi is both the translator of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* and the author of *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, MI: MIT Press, 1992). Additionally, Massumi's Deleuze-driven *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) has been an important catalyst for affect theory. The essay with which it begins, “The Autonomy of Affect,” first published in 1995, was one of the earliest attempts to shake poststructuralist theory free of its dog-with-a-bone fixation on language and representation and redirect it to affect, sensation and other related processes.

22 Brian Massumi, “Introduction: Like a Thought,” in *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xiii.

an act of expression. Within the terms of this hermeneutic, the act of interpretation reverses the act of expression and faithfully follows it back to its presumed origin, an interior space within an individual psyche. The responsible interpreter attempts to recreate the context in which the author wrote ("One has only understood what one has reconstructed in all its relationships and in its context"), in order to recreate in turn the intentions presumed to explain why the author wrote what he or she did ("Every utterance corresponds to a sequence of thoughts of the utterer").²³ The putative intention-filled interiority of a variety of biblical-authorial personages has been the Holy Grail of an uncountable number of critical biblical scholars over a great many decades. These collective quests rely on communicational models of expression that share many overarching assumptions.

Massumi, however, continues, "All of these assumptions have been severely tested by structuralist, poststructuralist, postmodern, and post-postmodern thought. Communication has long since fallen on hard times and with it, expression."²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari also hold that communication "is a questionable concept."²⁵ No surprise there. The surprise is rather that they hold fast to the concept of expression while jettisoning the concept of communication.²⁶

A paradox. How can expression express without communicating? Because expression does not simply reproduce the content of communication. Consider again how the traditional model works:

23 The parenthetical quotations are from Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism: And Other Writings*, ed. Andrew Bowie, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228–229. Without referencing Schleiermacher or the philosophical, theological or biblical-scholarly traditions appended to his name, Foucault deftly articulates their enabling assumptions: "Usually, the historical description of things said is shot through with the opposition of interior and exterior; and wholly directed by a desire to move from the exterior [...] towards the essential nucleus of interiority. To undertake the history of what has been said is to re-do, in the opposite direction, the work of expression: to go back from statements preserved through time and dispersed in space, toward that interior secret that preceded them, left its mark in them, and (in every sense of the term) is betrayed by them." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 120–121.

24 Massumi, "Introduction," xiii.

25 Ibid. See further Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 75–85. Titled "Language Is Informational and Communicational," this is the first section of the chapter titled "November 20, 1923 – Postulates of Linguistics." The title of the section is also its target.

26 See especially Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 147, together with his *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 179–182.

Traditionally, for communicational purposes, expression is anchored to a "content." The content is viewed as having an objective existence prior and exterior to the form of its expression. The assumed solidity of the content transfers, across the mirror-like correspondence or moulded conformity, into a trustworthiness of the subjective expression. Moulded, mirroring expression faithfully conveys content: re-presents it at a subjective distance. This enables communication, understood as a faithful exchange of contents transmitted at a convenient distance from their objective emplacement. In this model, content is the beginning and end of communicative expression: at once its external cause and its guarantee of validity.²⁷

This is the container model of communication, a commonplace one in biblical studies. The biblical scholar reaches out blindly but confidently over the historical void separating her from the biblical author and feels for the precious parcel of semantic content she is certain is being passed to her. Gripping it tightly, she hauls it out of the gloom and triumphantly holds it aloft.

The container model, therefore, is also a retrieval²⁸ model. Its opposite would be the constructive model whereby the assorted discourses of knowledge covertly conspire to produce that which they purport to describe. Through a sleight of hand so subtle that even she herself is unaware of it, the biblical scholar would have fabricated in the concealing gloom of the historical void the very parcel of semantic content she appears to extract from it. Foucault has provided the most elegant articulation of the constructive model. Foucault's constructivism, however, has no place for expression: "In this analysis [the] archaeology [of knowledge] suspends the theme of expression."²⁹

Deleuze and Guattari are not content, however, with the constructive model, as Massumi explains:

Conformity and correspondence sneak back in through the back door [...]. A subject is made to be in conformity with the system that produced it, such that the subject reproduces the system [...]. The subject does not express the system. It is an expression of the system. The system expresses itself in its subjects' every "chosen" deed and mystified word – in its

27 Massumi, "Introduction," xiv–xv.

28 See Oda Wischmeyer, in this volume, 37: "Scholarly text analysis has produced many methodological instruments for discovering the – often hidden – intentions an author has incorporated into his or her text."

29 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 164.

very form of life [...]. Where, in the conformity and correspondence between the life-form of the subject and the system of power that produced it, has the potential for change gone?³⁰

The constructive model is too constrictive, then. It accords too much authority to discourse, language and culture; to codes, conventions and regulations; to the always already said and the always about to be said; to the predictable, the unsurprising and the preordained. Rather than allowing expression to be subsumed in discursive construction, swallowed up by it, Deleuze and Guattari retrieve expression and recode it.³¹ The system – any system – does not simply reproduce itself, replicating itself through the human subjects through which it expresses itself. Expression also expresses the previously unexpressed, for expression is an *event*. But what is an event?

The event is a flash of lightning, whether literal or metaphorical: “Before the flash there is only potential, in a continuum of intensity: a field of charged particles. The triggering of the charge is a movement immanent to the field of potential, by which it plays out the consequences of its own intensity.”³² The literary act, too, is, or at least could be, such an event. To recode literature, however, biblical literature included, as an event of expression is not to resurrect a Romantic conception of literary genius:

It is important not to think of the creativity of expression as if it brought something into being from nothing. There is no tabula rasa of expression. It always takes place in a cluttered world. Its field of emergence is strewn with the after-effects of events past, already-formed subjects and objects and the two-pronged systems of capture (of content and expression, bodies and words) regulating their interaction: nets aplenty. In order to potentialize a new type, the atypical expression must evade these already established articulations. It must extract itself from captures ready and waiting, falling for an instant through the propositional mesh.³³

30 Massumi, “Introduction,” xvi–xvii.

31 It is in desperate need of recoding, in their view: “We cannot accept the idealist category of ‘expression’ [...]” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 6.

32 Massumi, “Introduction,” xxiv. “Intensity,” as noted above (note 10), is frequently a synonym for “affect” or “affective force” for Deleuze and Guattari and for Massumi following them. For more on the event, see the chapter titled “What Is an Event?” in Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 76–82.

33 Massumi, “Introduction,” xxix.

The source of the atypical expression, moreover, is not the interiority of a classically humanist authorial subject: a Shakespeare, a Fourth Evangelist, a Yahwist. Deleuze and Guattari's author would be fully as dead as that of Roland Barthes.³⁴ Expression, for Deleuze and Guattari, is impersonal. It is agency without an agent, a "subjectless subjectivity."³⁵ Where, then, is expression located? "Expression is not in a language-using mind, or in a speaking subject vis à vis its objects. Nor is it rooted in an individual body."³⁶ Expression is too immense for a single body to contain,³⁷ especially an authorial body, most of all a biblical authorial body. And yet expression needs human bodies in order to flow:

In order to move through, it must move in. If expression's charge of potential were not incarnated in an individual body capable of renewing it, it would cease to be expressed. It would dissipate, unperceived, like the lightning flash you just missed seeing. Expression's culmination effects consent to perceptual pick-up by the human body.³⁸

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- 34 Referring, of course, to Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148. For Deleuze and Guattari, it is writing *tout court* as traditionally conceived that is dead: "The death of writing is like the death of God or the death of the father: the thing was settled a long time ago, although the news of the event is slow to reach us, and there survives in us the memory of extinct signs with which we still write. The reason for this is simple: writing implies a use of language in general according to which graphism becomes aligned on the voice, but also overcodes it and induces a fictitious voice from on high that functions as a signifier. The arbitrary nature of the thing designated, the subordination of the signified, the transcendence of the despotic signifier, and finally, its consecutive decomposition into minimal elements within a field of immanence uncovered by the withdrawal of the despot – all this is evidence that writing belongs to the imperial despotic representation" (*Anti-Oedipus*, 240). What, then, makes an author "great" for Deleuze and Guattari? An author is great not because of what he or she has put into her text-as-container but because of what he or she has unleashed in her text-as-machine. An author is great when "he cannot prevent himself from tracing flows and causing them to circulate, flows that split asunder the catholic and despotic signifier of his work, and that necessarily nourish a revolutionary machine on the horizon. That is [...] the moment when language is no longer defined by what it says [...] but by what causes it to move, to flow, and to explode – desire" (*ibid.*, 133).
- 35 Massumi, "Introduction," xxiv. See further Paul Bains, "Subjectless Subjectivities," in *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Brian Massumi (New York: Routledge, 2002), 101–116.
- 36 Massumi, "Introduction," xxi.
- 37 "Its moving-through envelops the sky-like immensity of its field conditions of emergence" (*ibid.*, xxix).
- 38 *Ibid.*, xxix.

Again, where is expression located?

Expression is abroad in the world – where the potential is for what may become. It is non-local, scattered across a myriad struggles over what manner of life-defining nets will capture and contain that potential in reproducible articulations, or actual functions. Determinate minds, subjects, bodies, objects, and institutions are the result. The subject, its embodiment, the meanings and objects it might own, the institutions that come to govern them, these are all conduits through which a movement of expression streams.³⁹

Implicit in the foregoing is another tenet: Expression is also and always susceptible to dilution or domestication, to capture or control. The event of the lightning flash, whether literal or literary, may become a conduit “for a mythic form of expression. Zeus, for example, emerges to take the credit.”⁴⁰ Or Matthew or John does, taking credit for forms of expression that previously did not need their names.

A creator now owns the deed. A subject has been added to the expression, a doer to the deed. The energies creative of the flash have extended into myth creation: from physical ontogenesis to mythopoiesis. Once the heroic subject has emerged to claim his object, a “tracing” relation may be established between the two substantives. Zeus is “like” the lighting. He is as decisive and unforgiving as his thunderbolt. They share properties. They conform and they correspond. Properties: the flash has gone from the expressive to the possessive.⁴¹

The heroic authors of the biblical tradition, most of all the pseudonymous authors – Moses, David, Solomon, Matthew, John and the rest – are mythopoeitic constructs. They march in to claim the texts they did not write. But even the non-pseudonymous biblical authors participate in a specular economy. The texts become their mirrors. The properties the texts are thought to reflect become the authors’ properties, their features. And it is not only the pre-critical biblical tradition that engages in this exercise. Critical scholarship on Mark of the past century or so, for instance, has successively transformed him from modest compiler of traditions into seminal theologian, to ingenious literary

39 Ibid., xxi.

40 Ibid., xxv.

41 Ibid. See further Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 316–317.

author, even proto-postmodernist. With every reconfiguration of the mirror there is a corresponding reconfiguration of the evangelist. And those surface images are invariably imagined to contain concealed depths. The evangelist is always equipped with an imagined interiority replete with imagined intentions of which his Gospel is imagined to be the product, the expression.

"There is an autonomy of expression," Deleuze and Guattari contend,⁴² independent of what Foucault has termed the "author-function."⁴³ The question then arises: What kind of power does expression possess and how is it exercised? "Every use of language carries a certain performative force," for Deleuze and Guattari,

if only because it presupposes a conventional context of intelligibility, and that conventional girding brings pressure to bear toward a certain manner of response. Every utterance is an "order-word" in the sense that it moulds, subtly or directly, the potential actions of its addressees.⁴⁴

The performative utterance may be of any length, presumably, up to and including the book-utterance: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity" (Deut 30:15); "Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching" (Prov 1:8); "These things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (John 20:31); "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev 22:7).

Yet the performative utterance can never predetermine its outcome, its uptake. Deleuze and Guattari set this element of radical unpredictability, this unceasing emergence of the never-before-seen-or-said, at the center of their model of expression, which again differentiates it from the communicational model in which an intended content is transmitted from the interiority of a speaker or writer to the interiority of a hearer or reader. In a successful act of communication, the form of the content received corresponds with the form of the content expressed. What Paul intended to say in Romans about the relation of law and grace as it intersects with the relation of Jew and Gentile – the presumed content of his expression, with all its exquisite theological nuances

42 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 317.

43 Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 101–120; see esp. 108–113.

44 Massumi, "Introduction," xviii–xix. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 76: "The elementary unit of language – the statement – is the order-word [...]. Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed." This argument is fully elaborated in *ibid.*, 75–85.

and circumstantially determined contours – is finally apprehended adequately by a present or future Pauline scholar and entrusted to an article, monograph or commentary that then becomes the repository of that necessarily rephrased but accurately captured content. Even if many Pauline scholars would not assent to such a bald recital of this teleological saga, most operate nonetheless as though it were their professional *raison d'être*.

How else might expression and its decoding and recoding be understood? This brings us to what Massumi calls “the cornerstone” of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of expression “in their solo as well as collaborative writings.”⁴⁵ It is the principle that content and expression do not share a form but each has its own form: “Loosely basing themselves on the work of the linguist Louis Hjelmslev, they contend that there are any number of forms of content and forms of expression, each with their own substance or specific materiality.”⁴⁶

The form of the content does not resemble the form of the expression, but neither does the form of the content precede (and thereby predetermine) the form of the expression. If Paul’s letter to the Romans is a form of expression in the Deleuzoguattarian sense, its form – or, more precisely, its forms – of content are incommensurably different and virtually infinite.⁴⁷ They include

45 Massumi, “Introduction,” xviii.

46 Ibid. The linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure does not serve as a significant catalyst for Deleuze or Guattari’s philosophy of language. This distinguishes them from such Parisian contemporaries as Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva, all of whom radicalize and “poststructuralize” Saussure’s structural linguistics. Deleuze and Guattari, in contrast, build on the glossematics of the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev (itself a critical realignment of Saussurean linguistics), in combination with the semiotics of the American logician Charles S. Peirce. (See, for example, Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 241–243, which explicitly contrasts Saussurean and Hjelmslevian linguistics, elevating the latter over the former.) This is one of the two major reasons why it has always been difficult to slot Deleuze and/or Guattari neatly into the French post-structuralist paradigm. The other major reason concerns affect and is encapsulated in an exchange between Guattari and an interviewer in which the latter interjects, “The dominant theoretical approaches in France, which have developed out of structuralism, close ranks around the linguistic signifier, disregarding non-discursive resonances and emotional pathways connected to them. They disregard what you call *non-verbal intensities* that blaze existential territories and ‘pathic’ routes.” Guattari replies, “Right. The linguistic signifier in no way encloses all of the components combining to produce subjectivity.” Félix Guattari and Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, “From Transference to the Aesthetic Paradigm: A Conversation with Félix Guattari,” in *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Brian Massumi (New York: Routledge, 2002), 243. Emphasis original.

47 Using “virtual” here in its special Deleuzian sense. Deleuze distinguishes the virtual from the possible: “The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a ‘realization.’ By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses

any and every way Romans or any portion of it has ever been actualized by any and every reader or hearer. They include an actualization by a certain sixteenth-century German monk whose anguished and obsessive meditations on Romans 1:17 impelled him to actions that transformed Europe and the world irreversibly; they include an actualization by the faithful of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, for whom the most important verses in the New Testament are Romans 1:26–27 and which they translate as “God hates fags,” infamously emblazoning that rendering on placards and brandishing it at gay pride parades, funerals of AIDS victims and other such events;⁴⁸ they even include an actualization by a minor New Testament scholar who, in an essay on the same verses of Romans, contends that the letter as a whole is best regarded as a saga of soteriological sex change, since the Jesus of Romans appears to be a woman forever in the process of becoming a man.⁴⁹

But back to Massumi on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of expression:

The reciprocal actions of content and expression have to pass a gap of non-resemblance which breaks [...] the symmetry between content and expression assumed by the communicational model [...]. What happens in the break is the crux of the matter for Deleuze and Guattari [...]. There is no logical or teleological reason why that particular articulation had to be. Its power was the cumulative result of a thousand tiny performative struggles peppered throughout the social field. The connection was made, and it was made collectively, under the control of no individual subject.⁵⁰

In my own case, my actualization of Romans by means of queer theory depended upon an incalculable number of performative struggles both tiny and tremendous, few of them involving me personally, but ranging from the LGBTQ activism of the late 1980s and early 1990s, associated especially with the group Queer Nation, in symbiotic relationship to which the term queer theory was

a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualization.” Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 263. For a particularly arresting expression of this theme, see Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 29–32.

48 The church's website is, in fact, titled “God Hates Fags”: www.godhatesfags.com, 2017/04/27.

49 Stephen D. Moore, “Sex and the Single Apostle,” in *God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible*, *Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 133–172.

50 Massumi, “Introduction,” xix. See further Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 66–67.

coined and the academic phenomenon bearing that name was launched; to more proximate struggles within the United Methodist Church around LGBTQ issues and the courageous stand the seminary in which I teach has taken in that particular struggle (the courage being displayed by certain UMC faculty in the seminary, of which I am not one), making this seminary a safe space in which to pursue the kind of iconoclastic project I took on in that Romans experiment; and so on down to an extremely fine-grained level (including an intimate level on which I would not care to comment) that would be impossible to detail adequately. Another way of articulating this complexity is to affirm that expression always occurs in an assemblage.⁵¹

To understate the matter, the singular is always already collective for Deleuze and Guattari. As Massumi explains:

Deleuze and Guattari [...] argue that even the most ostensibly personal expression may be directly political, in that it envelops a potential collective. For example, the subject of literary expression, to the extent that it is effectively creative, is not the individual author but a “people to come” [...]. The atypical expression emits the potential for an unlimited series of further (collective) expressions by individuals who will retrospectively be assigned by a propositional system of capture to membership in a group (psychosocial type, class, ethnicity, nation).⁵²

This people to come, birthed by atypical expression – atypical expression later dubbed “biblical,” say – perennially vulnerable to propositional capture, might also be a religion, even a “world religion,” to come. How complete will its capture be? If we are talking about Christianity (and apparently we are), its capture will be dismayingly complete after about the fourth century: “A complementary order of conventional performative expressions will help manage

51 See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 84: “The collective assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices [...] from which I draw my voice. I always depend on a molecular assemblage of enunciation that is not given in my conscious mind, any more than it depends solely on my apparent social determinations, which combine many heterogeneous regimes of signs. Speaking in tongues.”

52 Massumi, “Introduction,” xxviii. On the “people to come,” see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 345, in addition to their *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 176: “Art is the language of sensations [...]. The writer uses words, but by creating a syntax that makes them pass into sensation that makes the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the ‘tone,’ the language of sensations, or the foreign language within language that summons forth a people to come.”

this new form of content. The force of collective, expressive emergence will be streamed into stratified functions of power."⁵³

But the capture need not be absolute. What Deleuze and Guattari would term "lines of flight" emerge in the form of an "unless" clause: "Unless: the collectivity in the making resists pick-up by an established stratum, insisting on defining its own traits, in a self-capture of its own anomaly. In this case, they will retain a shade of the unclassifiable and a margin of unpredictability in the eyes (or net) of existing systems of reference, no matter how hard those systems try fully to contain them."⁵⁴ How will the collectivity in the making resist utter containment? Because they will still have those strange, stammering, people-to-come-summoning biblical books; and if several centuries of incessant biblical-scholarly labor – a colossal labor of confinement – has taught us anything at all, it is that these books cannot be confined completely (otherwise we would have nothing left to talk about as a profession). They continue unceasingly not just to engender effusions of sameness, stultifying expressions of the status quo, oppressive confirmations of existing arrangements, but also to engender the previously unthought and untried, the socially innovative and experimental, to foster a de-stagnating "ethics of emergence"⁵⁵ that would also be an ethics of expression.

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53 Massumi, "Introduction," xxviii.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., xxii.

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#John: Author-Names in Revelation and Other New Testament Texts

Clarissa Breu

The sign # (“hashtag”) was elected word of the year in 2014 in Switzerland, reflecting its presence in communication processes (as the Swiss radio station “sfr 3” listed on its website on December 3, 2014). Recently, #metoo showed the strong impact hashtags can have. They are tags that help to classify texts and utterances and to facilitate key word searches on Twitter, Facebook and other social networks. Different texts that treat the same topic can be linked when attached with the same hashtag. Hashtags can also be used on a metalevel, for instance, to comment on a wrong utterance or a mistake (#fail). They can work in a rhetorical way, stressing a certain aspect of a certain message (#sohappy). Moreover, hashtags function as campaign-labels in marketing (#uniwienlernt).

All of these possible functions show that they do not mean anything by themselves but are defined by their functions. Everyone can use them; there is no simple means to control them. Accordingly, their original author or messenger and his or her intention are irrelevant. Whoever uses a hashtag willingly gives up control over it. Sometimes, so-called hashtag-hijackers use established hashtags for their purposes, for instance, the campaign #McDStories, in which a platform intended for sharing happy moments with Mc Donald’s was instead used to spread critique of the fast food chain. A hashtag does not point to its origin; the focus lies on its effect and how this effect evolves in different contexts.

But why write at length about the word of the year from 2014? It does not seem current, nor does it refer to a practice of writing in antiquity. Nonetheless, it does help to explain how I approach the name “John” in Revelation. Let us turn, therefore, to another question: What does the name “John” have to do with a hashtag?

1 Theoretical Point of Departure

In order to explain, I must refer to the theories I apply, namely, to Jacques Derrida's and Michel Foucault's notions of authorship. Postmodern theories question the notion that the author precedes his or her text or exists apart from and independent of it. Language always exceeds the author and his or her intentions.¹ It is a system that binds him or her to certain laws to which he or she has to submit. The author has no control over words, comparable to a campaign manager who has no control over the hashtag he or she initiated. This general assumption is approached differently by Derrida than by Foucault.

1.1 *Derrida and Iterability*

Iterability (derived from *iterum*, Latin for "again," which is derived from *itara*, Sanskrit for "different"²) describes the structure of writing, namely, the *necessity* of any element of language being endlessly repeatable in order to be an element of language. Every repetition, however, changes the meaning of an utterance because repetition is always repetition within a new context.³ Contexts play an important part in the proliferation of meaning, and a new context proffers a new meaning. Nonetheless, a context does not *define* meaning, because it cannot be circumscribed in a definite way⁴ nor can anyone define all the possible contexts of an utterance.⁵ As a result, a text cannot have one single message or meaning: Its meaning cannot be defined in a definite way *because* it is repeatable in different contexts and thus always contains the possibility of being understood differently.⁶

1 See Peter Clar, in this volume, 66: "The author is created by language."

2 Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7.

3 Cf. iterability in Henning Hupe's contribution to this volume, 213, in which he uses it to describe repetition in choreographies.

4 Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 7.

5 Jacques Derrida, "Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion," in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 136: "[...] there is nothing outside context."

6 See also Stanley Fish, "Normal Circumstances, Literal Language, Direct Speech Acts, the Ordinary, the Everyday, the Obvious, What Goes without Saying, and Other Special Cases," *CI* 4, no. 4 (1978): 640, doi: 10.1086/447959: "This does not mean that any sentence is potentially a proposal [...] or that it doesn't matter what sentence a speaker utters, but that for any sentence circumstances could be imagined in which it would be understood as a proposal, and as nothing but a proposal." Fish also stresses that there are countless possible contexts for a sentence, and therefore a sentence does not have any inherent meaning. But it usually has one special meaning in one special context. In contrast to Derrida, Fish states that a certain context of an utterance can be defined, although there are endless *possible* contexts.

The phrase “green is or” is meaningless in an exegetical paper, but it could be an example of wrong grammar in a grammar book or a verse in an avant-garde text. The phrase does not necessarily belong to one single context. As a structure of linguistic signs, it can be repeated in endless contexts. Iterability is the possible dissociation of an utterance from its context.⁷

Now, of course one could object that the original context could define its meaning. But according to Derrida, the so-called original context should not be prioritized. A word structure is independent and part of a language system that cannot be reduced to an original context. To speak intertextually, the original context is most likely not the first time these words were used. They can be transported to other contexts and be meaningful to readers even when they are not aware of their previous context.

Derrida explains that the original context is not the context that defines meaning with the example of a wedding scene set on the stage. A stage wedding and a legal marriage are connected by the iterability of the words uttered there (the ritual is repeatable and recognizable – even on stage). Therefore, not only the original context of “civil registry office” explains the wedding on stage, but also the new context of “stage” explains the wedding at the civil registry office: It shows that the possibility that the words are not uttered seriously is always part of a serious wedding. A wedding can only be “true” or “effective” in a legal sense because it can be repeated in situations where it has no legal effect; it can only be serious because it can be repeated in a non-serious way.⁸ What can be analyzed is not only its meaning in a so-called original context but its effect in different possible contexts.

To Derrida, there is no original context and no original. We can, for example, only define what an original writing of Derrida is when there are elements of his speech that can be distinguished, transferred and imitated. The definition of his text’s identity implies the destruction of this same identity.⁹ Let me add one more example to illustrate this: Charlie Chaplin did not win the contest of Charlie Chaplin impersonations. The elements that established his identity (like his hat and shoes) also destroyed it. In the end, he was judged not to resemble himself.¹⁰ The original has to be accompanied by a copy in order to be an original.¹¹ Therefore, there is no pure original.

7 Gerald Posselt et al., *Sprachphilosophie: Eine Einführung* (Wien: Facultas, 2016), 223.

8 Jacques Derrida, “Limited Inc a b c ...,” in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 89.

9 Posselt, *Sprachphilosophie*, 228.

10 Nijay Gupta, “What Is in a Name? The Hermeneutics of Authorship Analysis Concerning Colossians,” *CurBR* 11, no. 2 (2013): 215, doi: 10.1177/1476993X12439885.

11 Posselt, *Sprachphilosophie*, 228.

Applied to authorship and author-names, iterability shows that the simple appearance of an author-name does not refer directly to a real author and his or her original intentions. This can especially be stated for a signature-like utterance like “I, John” in Revelation. This signature-like name seems to evoke the presence of an author. But the sign “I, John” or “John” is repeatable. Like a hashtag, it can be written by anyone who wants to use it. The person called “John” does not necessarily have to be present when someone writes under his name. A proper name is characterized by the fact that it works even without the presence of the person it refers to, that it is repeatable. Accordingly, this person cannot control the use of his or her name. His or her intention is not relevant to understanding its use in endlessly different contexts.

To summarize so far, Derrida’s notion of “iterability” enables an author-name to work independently of the person it originally referred to and its original context – like a hashtag.

1.2 *Foucault and Author-Functions*

Foucault comes to the same conclusion, but his focus lies on discourse. To him, a text is not *appropriated by* an author but *attributed to* him or her by a discourse that exceeds the author and his or her intentions. Foucault does not ask who the real author was and what he or she meant, but instead why a certain author is connected to a certain text by a discourse and what effects this connection has within this discourse. Foucault does not define what he means by “discourse.” It can be understood as a space that establishes and destroys rules at the same time,¹² a place not ruled by subjects but where subjects can speak from certain positions. Therefore, the discourse produces its subject matter, not the other way around.¹³ To define someone as a text’s author is an effect of a discourse. The discourse uses an author-name to fulfill certain functions. It can be used to define the source of a text or to ascertain its credibility.¹⁴ The author as a concept can solve contradictions in a text, because they can be explained by his or her subconscious thoughts or biographical developments. Moreover, the author-name functions as an anchor in reality: Fictional

12 Peter Bürger, “Denken als Geste: Versuch über den Philosophen Michel Foucault,” in *Spiele der Wahrheit: Michel Foucaults Denken*, ed. François Ewald and Bernhard Waldenfels (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 99.

13 Carsten Wolfers, *Die Foucaultschen Subjekte* (Wien et al.: Lit, 2009), 138.

14 Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, *Essential Works by Foucault* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 213.

texts are thus connected with a “real” biography.¹⁵ Like a hashtag, the author-name helps to classify a text (e.g., to assemble all of the Shakespearean texts, even though they could have been written by someone else). Even if the sentence “the Sonnets were written by Shakespeare” were wrong because Francis Bacon wrote them, they could still be “Shakespearean,” namely, attributed to Shakespeare by a certain discourse in order to ascertain a certain effect.¹⁶ One of these effects could be promotion, meaning “any act or process of communication that serves to stimulate the circulation of something in the context of its competitive exchange.”¹⁷ As I see it, promotion is thus comparable to authority, in that it can also be described as a means of stimulating the circulation of a text. The author-name then works like an “identification tag”¹⁸ (or hashtag) of a certain label. And, as we have seen, such tags do not necessarily refer to their original embedment. The author-name seems to refer to a single person, but in fact it can contain different levels of authorship: redaction, edition, the act of writing and re-writing, influence, etc.¹⁹ When confronted with hashtags, it is not interesting to find out who used them first but which ideas are labeled with the same hashtags and which effects can be derived from that. This is similar to notions of authorship in antiquity, when scribes, copyists, editors, etc., all participated in the process of writing. Scriptures were then attributed to a single name, because that name could guarantee a reliable source and the text’s transmission and help to situate it in a certain context. Foucault’s text “What Is an Author?” is embedded within a modern discourse or notion of authorship, dealing, for example, with questions of copyright. Nonetheless,

15 Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston et al.: Routledge&Kegan Paul, 1981), 58.

16 Peter Lamarque, “The Death of the Author: An Analytical Autopsy,” *BJA* 30, no. 4 (1990): 327, doi: 10.1093/bjaesthetics/30.4.319.

17 Andrew Wernick, “Authorship and the Supplement of Promotion,” in *What Is an Author?* ed. Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 88.

18 *Ibid.*, 87.

19 See also Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 1985), 23, who states that there is no such a thing as “anterior authority”; Jacques Derrida, “Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum),” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 35: “[...] it is always necessary to be more than one in order to speak, several voices are necessary for that ...”; see also A. K. M. Adam, in this volume, 191: “the intentions the securely-identified author might have had when composing a letter [...] have been subjected to editorial processes that inevitably inflect the expression of those intentions in the manuscripts,” and Gregory Peter Fewster, in this volume, 168: “Ancient copyists and editors held great influence on the shape, contents, look and feel of ancient textual media. But these interact in diverse ways with ongoing influences of text’s authors, what I want to call the spectral author.”

it can be stated that notions of authorship in antiquity are not that different from Foucault's "author-functions."²⁰

All in all, we learned from Derrida that an author-name works without the original author and from Foucault that an author-name helps to label a text and thus to embed it within a certain discourse.

Now that I have explained my theoretical starting point, I would like to turn to its application. First, I will look at the name "John" in Revelation, comparing it with three characteristics of hashtags, and then I will apply the same characteristics to other New Testament texts. My aim is to show that Revelation is one example of how to read a text with Foucault and Derrida, but that their theories can also be applied to other New Testament texts; they are not specially bound to Revelation. The three characteristics of hashtags are the following:

- a) Hashtags are part of a non-hierarchic referential system. As such, they undermine the author's authority over his or her text's meaning.
- b) Hashtags can be hijacked. An author-name can work without the original author and his or her intentions.
- c) Hashtags work like labels. An author-name helps to classify different texts and to arrange them around a connective figure.

2 The Author-Name in Revelation

2.1 *#John as Part of a Referential System*

Nowadays, books are mostly associated with one author-name that verifies their origin. In the case of Revelation, there is not just one name that points to the text's source, transmission and authority (used in the above-mentioned sense of "promotion"). Authority is deferred, as it is divided between different names; the text does not have one single origin.

In Revelation 1:1 the name "John" is mentioned for the first time, but John is not the only one transmitting the message; God, an angel and John's fellow servants, that is, other Christians, are also part of this referential system:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of

20 Karen L. King, "What Is an Author?" Ancient Author-Function in the Apocryphon of John and the Apocalypse of John," in *Scribal Practices and Social Structures among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*, ed. William E. Arnal et al., BETL 285 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 33.

God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Rev 1:1–3

The first three verses do not primarily enhance John's authority. The entirety of the first three verses is actually dedicated to the *text* of Revelation.²¹ Verse 1 describes its source and function ("to show his servants what must soon take place"), and its transmission (through the angel to John). The description of John in verse 2 can also be seen as a description of the book as a whole. Verse 3, finally, praises those who read the text, hear it and keep it. The text is described as the revelation of Jesus Christ, the word of God, the testimony of Jesus and as containing words of prophecy – four attributes that do not need the name "John" to enhance them.²² Thus, the author is only part of the text; he does not have authority over the text. The text is what it is all about, not John. John only has authority because he seems to be a reliable source. The name "John" is only one small part of a larger referential system that enhances the text's authority.

The referential system John is part of traverses the whole text. First of all, the chain of transmission in verse 1 is not a simple linear chain²³ leading from God to Christ, from Christ to the angel, from the angel to John, from John to the servants. The chain is not in the expected order:

Christ is mentioned before God,²⁴ the servants before the angel and John. Using the persons mentioned as structuring entities, I derive the following concentric structure from the first two verses:

A Christ
 B God
 C servants
 D angel
 C' servant John
 B' God
 A' Christ

21 Traugott Holtz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, NTD 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 18.

22 Jens-Wilhelm Taeger, "Offenbarung 1:1–3: Johanneische Autorisierung einer Aufklärungsschrift," *NTS* 49, no. 2 (2003): 181, doi: 10.1017/S0028688503000092.

23 Klaus Wengst, "Wie lange noch?" *Schreien nach Recht und Gerechtigkeit – eine Deutung der Apokalypse des Johannes* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 39.

24 Hanna Roose, *Das Zeugnis Jesu: Seine Bedeutung für die Christologie, Eschatologie und Prophetie in der Offenbarung des Johannes*, Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 32 (Tübingen et al.: Francke, 2000), 158–159.

Christ and God appear as the source and goal of the text. They are not clearly separated from each other, as the verb ἐσήμανεν and the pronoun attributed to the angel and the servants can grammatically belong to both of them.²⁵

As a fellow-servant, John can be paralleled with the other servants; he is one of them but equipped with a personal name. The only one without a parallel counterpart is the angel. But he is not the end or center of the transmission process but rather points to John and to God/Christ. This is underscored by a reference at the end of the book: In 22:9 John kneels down before the angel, and the angel stops him by pointing to God as the true reason for adoration. Thus, the angel who is the middle of the concentric structure in 1:1 points to God, who is on the margins of the concentric structure. At the same time, he stands in line with John and the other servants, calling himself a “fellow servant.” The angel as the middle of the concentric structure thus diminishes his own authority through a referential system that binds together the whole book. The different sources of the text point to each other; lines between them grow hazy. This is what Derrida concludes about Revelation, too:

One does not know [...] to whom the apocalyptic dispatch (*envoi*) returns; it leaps (*saute*) from one place of emission to the other [...] it goes from one destination, one name, and one tone to the other; it always refers to (*renvoie à*) the name and to the tone of the other that is there but as having been there and before yet coming, no longer being or not yet there in the present of the *récit* [...]. No longer is one sure who loans his voice and his tone to the other in the Apocalypse; no longer is one very sure who addresses what to whom [...].²⁶

This referential system is simplified by the title ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ, which was added to the text long after it was composed. John is thus underscored as the main transmitting agent. This fact shows the wish to have texts tagged with a simple author-name fulfilling different author-functions.

All in all, the author-name “John” in Revelation can be compared to a hashtag, because it does not stand alone. It is pointing to other parties involved in the transmission process and to the text’s authority. #John is not only a name but a whole referential system.

25 Wengst, *Wie lange noch?* 39.

26 Jacques Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy,” *Oxford Literary Review* 6, no. 2 (1984): 27, doi: 10.3366/olr.1984.001.

2.2 *#John Hijacked*

Like hashtags, author-names do not necessarily point to the original author, which can be shown by an example of reception in the Early Church:

Some parties, namely, Gaius and the Alogers, thought that #John was not really called John but that the chiliastic heretic Cerinth hid behind this innocuous name.²⁷ To them, Cerinth hijacked the name “John” in order to add a credible name to Revelation, which proclaimed his chiliastic ideas.²⁸ They thought that the name “John” was no hint of the identity of Revelation’s source but worked instead as an author-function securing credibility. The Alogers are said to have rejected Revelation and the Gospel of John because they thought that Cerinth had been their originator.²⁹

We can draw two conclusions from the attribution to Cerinth: First, an author-name does not necessarily point to the real origin of a text. Therefore, some interpreters supposed that the author-name does not work as a determination of the text’s source and origin but as a means of establishing credibility. They assumed “John” was a hijacked hashtag used for a heretic’s intentions. The name itself does not give any evidence for their position or to the contrary because it works like a hashtag that potentially anyone could use.

Nevertheless and secondly, the author-function of classification is still valid in the case of the Alogers: They attributed the Gospel of John *and* Revelation to Cerinth. The author-name they have in common seems to bind both Scriptures together in this reception process.

The discussion in the Early Church shows that the effect of the author-name “John” was not necessarily that everyone believed it to point to Revelation’s origin. Already in the Early Church, “hashtag hijacking” was taken into consideration.

2.3 *#John as a Label*

Hashtags work within a referential system because they can be repeated, they always look the same, and they can be used by everyone who wants to be part of the same referential system. Differences are united under this same label.

The exegetical discussion about the Johannine School can be seen as a result of the author-function of classification. The Johannine School combines unity and difference as it binds together Scriptures under the name “John” that share certain similarities but still have totally different approaches. It unites texts that are somehow associated with the name “John” without stating that

²⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7, 25, 2.

²⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3, 28, 1–2.

²⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51, 3, 1.

John was their real author. The name “John” and its classificatory function seem to suggest that they are somehow related, but with regard to content they seem different.³⁰ The notion of a Johannine School combines different levels of unity and difference. It is possible to suppose a close circle (and point out similarities) or a loose concept (and underline differences). The name “John,” then, works like a hashtag labeling Johannine Scriptures.

Some even suppose that the prologue and epilogue, the only parts in Revelation that contain the name “John,” have been added later,³¹ in order to authorize the text within a Johannine circle.³² Thus, the name worked like a label promoting a text in a certain context and thus attributing authority to it. The fact that the name “John” can be used as a label, however, shows that it is not connected to its origin. Redactions, influences and intertextual allusions can be subsumed under the label “John.”

Derrida expresses the same thought when he calls John R. Searle, a philosopher with whom he often argued, *Sarl* (*société à responsabilité limitée*), a company.³³ He thus states that the name “Searle” contains any person who influenced him or made his texts possible. The term seems to refer to a single individual, a certain person, but in fact points to a group of persons who are united under the label “Searle.”

All in all, the name “John” works as a classificatory label in the exegetical discourse because it helps to bind together similarity and difference and to unify a text possibly derived from different writers. The author-name within a text

30 Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, “The Quest for the Johannine School: The Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 23, no. 4 (1977): 409, doi: 10.1017/S0028688500012376; Otto Böcher, “Das Verhältnis der Apokalypse des Johannes zum Evangelium des Johannes,” in *L’Apocalypse Johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. Jan Lambrecht and George R. Beasley-Murray (Leuven: Duculot, 1980), 294; Richard A. Culpepper, “An Introduction to the Johannine Writings,” in *The Johannine Literature*, The Sheffield New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 26; Jörg Frey, “Appendix: Erwägungen zum Verhältnis der Johannesapokalypse zu den übrigen Schriften des Corpus Johanneum,” in *Die johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch mit einem Beitrag zur Apokalypse*, ed. Martin Hengel, WUNT 1/67 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 382.417; Martin Hengel, ed., *Die johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch*, WUNT 1/67 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 219.

31 David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), cxx; Akira Satake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, KEK 16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2008), 72–73; Franz Tóth, “Von der Vision zur Redaktion: Untersuchungen zur Komposition, Redaktion und Intention der Johannesapokalypse,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Kontexte – Konzepte – Rezeption*, ed. Jörg Frey, James A. Kelhoffer and Franz Tóth, WUNT 1/287 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 354.

32 Taeger, “Offenbarung 1:1–3.”

33 Derrida, “Limited Inc a b c ...,” 36.

does not only have to serve as a means of historical reconstruction. It can also lead to a discussion of author-functions and of how an author's authority is never actually present through his or her name. Authority that could possibly control a text's meaning is not present in the author-name since the name is affected by iterability and thus not bound to an authoritative origin.

Quite often the question arises whether Revelation is a unique example or if the above-described theoretical viewpoint could also be applied to other New Testament texts. This question points to the dialectic between generalization and specialization, which is always on the table when applying philosophical theories to a New Testament text. That is why I would like to add some short reflections on other instances of authorship in the New Testament and how they could be approached from the viewpoints of Foucault and Derrida. The three characteristics of hashtags will be repeated and applied to other New Testament authors to show that Revelation is only an example. Postmodern theories also offer interesting viewpoints on other New Testament texts and their authors.

3 Names in Other New Testament Texts

3.1 *#beloveddisciple as Part of a Referential System*

The insight that an author-name is part of a referential system can be exemplified by the "Beloved Disciple" in the Gospel of John. In John 21:24, at the very end of the Gospel, the reader gets a hint of the identity of the author: "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true." But this verse evidently does not reveal anything about the text's historical origin; instead, it sends the reader on a journey through the whole text in search of this unnamed disciple.³⁴ The Beloved Disciple is mentioned some verses earlier (21:20); the following verses are concerned with his remaining until the *parousia*, and this context suggests that the disciple in 21:24 is also the Beloved Disciple. But who is the "we" in "we know that his testimony is true"?³⁵ Is this a hint of the existence of a group of redactors? And who is the Beloved Disciple? The reader is advised to search for information about him throughout the text. He does not appear explicitly before chapter 13, lying

34 Like Franz Tóth showed in a not yet published paper at the *Colloquium Iohanneum* in Münster in 2015.

35 James L. Resseguie, "The Beloved Disciple: The Ideal Point of View," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, ed. Steven A. Hunt et al., WUNT 1/314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 549, interprets the "we" as an authoritative "we" not referring to an actual group.

at Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. He reappears under the cross (19:26), in competition with Peter running to Jesus' grave (20:2) and in recognizing Jesus after his resurrection when he approaches the disciples at the Lake Tiberias (21:7). The text itself does not tell if the anonymous disciple in 1:35–40, 18:15–16 and 19:35 is to be equated with the Beloved Disciple.³⁶ These passages emphasize his important role as one of the first disciples (1:35–40), a witness (19:35) and a friend of the high priest (18:15–16).

Numerous attempts have been made to identify the Beloved Disciple. The possibilities are never-ending: Wolfgang Fenske argues for *John the Zebedee*,³⁷ parting from the observation that two disciples are mentioned in 1:35 and that only one, Andrew, is named in 1:40. Fenske suggests that the reader automatically thinks of John (whose brother is James) when he or she reads about Andrew (and his brother Simon Peter) in 1:40.³⁸ James H. Charlesworth argues for *Thomas*³⁹ because he knows about Jesus' wound in his side (20:25), but only one person – the Beloved Disciple – was present at the cross and could have witnessed that Jesus even had a wound in his side (19:34–35). Martin Hengel argues for *disciples of the presbyter John* who wanted to promote a Gospel so different from Mark's that they had to connect it as closely as possible to Jesus.⁴⁰ On the other hand, especially Joachim Kügler's literary approach to the passages about the Beloved Disciple, maintains the disciple's *anonymity* and claims that not even the first readers could have identified the disciple from signals in the text.⁴¹ Kurt Aland also points to the fact that it is impossible to derive the disciple's identity from the text.⁴² Some state that the sons of Zebedee mentioned in 21:2 might be a hint,⁴³ but this hint is very weak.

36 Derek Tovey, "An Anonymous Disciple: A Type of Discipleship," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, ed. Steven A. Hunt et al., WUNT 1/314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 136, identifies the anonymous disciple with the beloved one; see also Resseguie, "Beloved Disciple," 541.

37 Wolfgang Fenske, *Der Lieblingsjünger: Das Geheimnis um Johannes*, Biblische Gestalten 16 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 21.

38 Ibid., 23.

39 James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 423.

40 Hengel, *Die Johanneische Frage*, 209.

41 Joachim Kügler, *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte: Literarische, theologische und historische Untersuchungen zu einer Schlüsselgestalt johanneischer Theologie und Geschichte: Mit einem Exkurs über die Brotrede in Joh 6*, SBB 16 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 485.

42 Kurt Aland, "The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries," *JTS* 12, no. 1 (1961): 45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23957933>.

43 Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 518.

Approaching this debate about the Beloved Disciple from the viewpoint of the theories of Foucault and Derrida, I would say that neither the question of who the author really was nor the question if anonymity was intentionally inserted into the text or not can be answered. On the other hand, this theoretical viewpoint allows seeing the numerous exegetical works on the author in John as an *effect* of his anonymity. This approach works without speculating on the first readers' impressions and the author's intentions, yet nonetheless allows for a statement about the text, namely, that the anonymity of the author leads to a search for him throughout the text.

Parting from this simple assumption, I would now go further and say that the author's anonymity and the search for the Beloved Disciple also defer authorial authority in favor of textual authority. The Beloved Disciple guarantees the text's integrity and the truthfulness of his testimony (21:24) but not for his own authority. He is only one part of a system of witnesses, in which John the Baptist plays an even bigger role than the author (1:6–7, 15, 19, 34; 3:26). The importance of John the Baptist as a witness leads Franz Overbeck to argue that the Beloved Disciple is an idealized figure based on or inspired by John the Baptist.⁴⁴ Then again, Jesus surpasses John's testimony when he states that his deeds witness his being sent from the Father (5:36; 10:25). Even the Father (5:37), the Scriptures (5:39), the Spirit (15:26; 16:12) and the disciples (15:27) testify for Jesus. 21:24 can be understood as describing the Gospel itself as a witness. It can be stated that the Beloved Disciple's authority is not only deferred in favor of textual authority, but also that the text contains a referential system of witnesses. Often in the Gospel of John, witnessing for oneself is discredited (7:18; 8:13, 44; 16:13). Thus, no one witness can gain special importance, but all of them together contribute to a certain understanding of Jesus as God's Son. The Beloved Disciple's anonymity could fulfill the function of a non-present author-name, so that the text clearly has an author, but this author cannot be identified and thus cannot claim full authority. His anonymity points out that he does not speak on his own, but rather as part of a larger referential system: "Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him" (7:18). The Beloved Disciple does not point to a simple unified origin but to a collection of testimonies. Even this collection of testimonies, the Gospel itself, points away from itself as it states that much more could have been written (20:30): "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would

44 Franz Overbeck, *Das Johannesevangelium: Studien zur Kritik seiner Erforschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911), 417.

not have room for the books that should be written" (21:25). The book opens itself up to possible narrations that exceed it, and the anonymity of its author opens up the possibility of other witnesses as well.

The Beloved Disciple's anonymity defers his authority as it integrates him into a referential system. First of all, this system consists of references to the Beloved Disciple, references that could help to identify him and others who add to his characterization. Secondly, it consists of references to other witnesses who together try to communicate who Jesus was and what he did. That is why #beloveddisciple is comparable to #John in Revelation. Neither points to a simple origin that facilitates a reference to authorial intention, but rather to a network of origins that work together to approach an unapproachable message. Like hashtags, they evoke a whole narrative system, not a single person and his intentions.

3.2 #Paul Hijacked

When looking for explicitly named author-figures in the New Testament, one quickly comes to Paul and his letters. Due to the letter format that indicates a communication process between two parties, Paul's name appears quite often, for instance, when he writes "I, Paul" (2 Cor 10:1; Gal 5:2; 1 Thess 2:18; Phlm 19). Sometimes, he adds signature-like statements to his letters, in which he affirms having written some words in his own hand: "I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand" (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Phlm 19). He thus distinguishes himself from a possible secretary or writer to whom he might have dictated his letters.⁴⁵ These signatures try to establish the letters' origin.

When explaining iterability, Derrida writes about signatures that they have to be repeatable in order to work as signatures. But being repeatable, their origin does not have to be present in order that they can be written down.⁴⁶ They suggest a certain linkage with their original author and his or her intention, but actually this intention does not have to be present. Anyone can use a repeatable signature.

Interestingly enough, the exact same process can be shown within the New Testament. For example, at the end of 2 Thessalonians, a letter whose pseudepigraphic character is uncontested among many exegetes, we can read, "I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all

45 Joachim Gnllka, *Der Kolosserbrief*, HThKNT 5 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 247; Marco Frenschkowski, "Pseudepigraphie und Paulusschule: Gedanken zur Verfasserschaft der Deuteropaulinen, insbesondere der Pastoralbriefe," in *Das Ende des Paulus: Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte*, ed. Friedrich W. Horn, BZNW 106 (Berlin: de Gruyter), 255.

46 Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 20.

my letters. This is how I write" (2 Thess 3:17). Also the letter to the Colossians, which quite possibly is pseudonymous, is furnished with such a statement: "I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand" (Col 4:18). "I, Paul" expressions appear in the pseudonymous letters to the Ephesians and Colossians (cf. Eph 3:1; Col 1:23).⁴⁷ What happened? Did someone deliberately deceive his readers by using Paul's name to gain authority?

A quote by A. K. M. Adam shows how this pseudo-signature leads to Derrida and his thoughts on signatures and writing:

Poly ["I will call this writer Poly, for many identities have been ascribed to this shadow of Paul's" (39)], knowing the duplicity of signatures, simply enacts a strikingly Derridean rhetorical ploy. The forger plays on the ambiguity of the signifying signature to blur the distinction between his or her identity and Paul's identity, to exclude Paul from his own proper name.⁴⁸

The theories of Derrida and Foucault could lead to a different evaluation of pseudepigraphy.⁴⁹ Traditionally, pseudepigraphy was estimated to be full of flaws and treason.⁵⁰ With time, this assessment changed, and exegetes tried to find reasons to see pseudepigraphy as less morally wretched than previously judged. They stated, for example, that spiritual property was seen different in antiquity,⁵¹ or they pointed to the readers who might have easily noticed pseudepigraphy.⁵² But the idea that pseudepigraphy was recognized by readers⁵³ or not rejected⁵⁴ in antiquity has been especially criticized, based on sources that show the contrary.

47 Helmut Merkley, "Paulinische Theologie in der Rezeption des Kolosser- und Epheserbriefes," in *Paulus in den neutestamentlichen Spätschriften: Zur Paulusrezeption im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge, QD 89 (Freiburg et al.: Herder, 1981), 25–26.

48 A. K. M. Adam, "Deconstruction: On Making a Difference," in *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 40.

49 As suggested but not extensively developed in David Brakke: "Early Christian Lies and the Lying Liars Who Wrote Them: Bart Ehrman's Forgery and Counterforgery," *JR* 96 (2016): 378–390, doi: 10.1086/686567.

50 Nickolaus Walter et al., *Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon*, NTD 8/2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 191.

51 Frenschkowski, "Pseudepigraphie," 251 is against this view.

52 Martina Janßen, *Unter falschem Namen: Eine kritische Forschungsbilanz frühchristlicher Pseudepigraphie*, Arbeiten zur Religion und Geschichte des Urchristentums 14 (Frankfurt et al.: Peter Lang, 2003), 265.

53 Frenschkowski, "Pseudepigraphie," 243; Armin D. Baum, *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im Frühen Christentum: Mit ausgewählten Quellentexten samt deutscher Übersetzung*, WUNT 2/138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 31.

54 Frenschkowski, "Pseudepigraphie," 249; Baum, *Pseudepigraphie*, 34.

Another argument is to state that authors really identified with someone else or saw themselves as part of a school pointing back to the pseudonymous name.⁵⁵ Some scholars even establish an epoch of New Testament Pseudepigraphy, in which special rules prevailed and pseudepigraphy was the only way to confront certain problems at that time.⁵⁶ Howard Marshall even proposes changing the wording from “pseudonymity” or “pseudepigraphy” to the more neutral “allonymity” or “allegraphy” for texts written in another’s name but without the intent to deceive.⁵⁷ He lists three ways this would allow for this type of authorship in the context of antiquity: a secretary writing on someone else’s behalf, an edition after a person’s death or writing in a certain person’s style after his or her death.⁵⁸

Some arguments get close to what Derrida’s and Foucault’s insights offer for the debate. They state that pseudepigraphy is not about real authorship and the actual origin of a given text,⁵⁹ but about taking part in and promoting a certain authoritative tradition – for instance, that of Paul the Apostle.⁶⁰ Pseudepigraphy could thus express the wish to speak in another’s name and to promote his or her thoughts instead of one’s own.⁶¹ Moreover, some state that it helps to actualize a message in a certain situation, to interpret known traditions in a new light.⁶²

Eckart Reinmuth even points out that pseudonymous texts create fictive authors that are part of the texts, not outside of textual structures. His statement that pseudonymous texts live their own lives apart from their real authors comes very close to Derrida’s and Foucault’s theories on authorship.⁶³ Each of them offers an easy means of making a moral judgment on pseudepigraphy impossible by understanding it as a normal effect of language structure. Derrida’s notion of iterability implies that no authorial claim actually refers to the text’s real origin. The author writing a text and the author in a text are two

55 Janßen, *Namen*, 266.

56 Ibid., 267; Karl M. Fischer, “Anmerkungen zur Pseudepigraphie im Neuen Testament,” *NTS* 23, no. 1 (1977): 81, doi: 10.1017/S0028688500008407.

57 I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 84.

58 Ibid., 83–84.

59 Baum, *Pseudepigraphie*, 75; David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition*, WUNT 1/39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 43; Michael Gese, *Das Vermächtnis des Apostels: Die Rezeption der Paulinischen Theologie im Epheserbrief*, WUNT 2/99 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 10; Gnlika, *Kolosserbrief*, 193.

60 Baum, *Pseudepigraphie*, 75; Meade, *Pseudonymity*, 103; Gese, *Vermächtnis*, 249.

61 Gnlika, *Epheserbrief*, HThKNT 6 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 21.

62 Gnlika, *Kolosserbrief*, 200; Meade, *Pseudonymity*, 157; Merklein, “Paulinische Theologie,” 35.

63 Walter, *Briefe*, 193.

different figures. Anyone who wants to can add a certain author-name to a text; we do not know if this person was a secretary,⁶⁴ a comic, the real author or his or her mother.⁶⁵ This use of names does not necessarily have to be classified as misuse, because only a name that can be used by someone other than the so-called real author is a name. Pseudepigraphic texts show that the real author does not have to be present in order for someone to write in his or her name, proclaim his or her message or reinterpret it.

Foucault's "author-functions" add a second insight to this: Author-names can work in a classificatory way. They then show that a text can be read within a certain discourse (or tradition) without referring to its origin. Thus, Colossians and Ephesians are "Pauline" even if their real author is not Paul (as the above-mentioned texts are Shakespearean even if Francis Bacon is their real author). Their being "Pauline" does not mean that they totally agree with Paul's standpoints, but rather that they can be read in the light of his writings, compared to them and measured by them.⁶⁶ They are part of #Paul. The focus does not lie on the question of whether this hashtag is hijacked or not, but rather on what effects follow from its use. The deliberate intention to deceive the audience⁶⁷ is irrelevant from the viewpoint of Derrida and Foucault.

This idea can even be expanded and applied to classical literary criticism that usually excludes 1 Corinthians 14:33b–35(36)⁶⁸ from the original Pauline text because it can be argued that it interrupts the line of thought between 14:33a and (36)³⁷ and contradicts 1 Corinthians 11:5 or Galatians 3:28.

64 See the secretary hypothesis for Colossians; Frenschkowski, "Pseudepigraphie," 257.

65 Derrida, "Limited Inc a b c ...," 31.

66 Annette Merz, "The Fictitious Self-Exposition of Paul: How Might Intertextual Theory Suggest a Reformulation of the Hermeneutics of Pseudepigraphy?" in *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas L. Brodie et al., NTM 16 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 131, comes to a comparable conclusion by applying intertextual theory to the pseudonymous Pauline letters. She still points out the importance of their intention, however, as she states that intertextual allusions reveal their intention to be read within the framework of the Pauline letters.

67 See the typology of pseudepigraphy in Baum, *Pseudepigraphie*, 9.

68 33b: "[...] as in all the congregations of the Lord's people; 34: women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says; 35: If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church; 36: Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?

(33b: Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων; 34: αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλ' ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει; 35: εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοῦς ἰδίοις ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναῖκα λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ; 36: ἢ ἀφ' ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξηλθεν, ἢ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήντησεν;).

It is not clear whether verse 36 should also be seen as an interpolation.

Moreover, a comparison of manuscripts reveals that some put these verses before verse 36, others after verse 40. From a historical point of view, these verses' authority is diminished by stating that they are not originally from Paul. If they are seen instead as part of #Paul, we have to ask why we would ascribe more authority to them if they were originally from Paul: What is the difference if a text is from Paul or from someone who adds to Pauline thought? What can thus be revealed about our (normative) handling of biblical texts for ethical or ecclesiastical decisions? What are criteria for the importance or normativity of texts? All in all, the focus of interest shifts from addressing a normative prohibition (e.g., of female priests or pastors) with another normative assumption (the verses are not from Paul and therefore not authoritative) to trying to analyze a discourse and its implications. This example, moreover, shows that historical approaches and postmodern theories do not necessarily exclude each other. Also from a postmodern point of view, a text's historical development can be interesting when seen as part of a changing discourse – in this example about women and their role in Christian assemblies. The question is not who the original author really was but why someone could have been interested in adding to #Paul.

3.3 #*Theophilus* as a Label

The last example from the New Testament is a short consideration of Luke and Acts. I showed above that the label "John" binds together different Johannine Scriptures. Like them, Luke and Acts also have been viewed as coming from the same author.⁶⁹ Apart from linguistic and theological conformity, the two prologues lead to this assumption. In Luke 1:1–4 we read:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye witnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

And in Acts 1:1–2: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen."

69 Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 306.

Interestingly enough, the author only appears in the first person singular, whereas the name that binds together both books is the name of the intended reader, Theophilus, who is either a fictional character appealing to anyone who loves (*philus*) god (*theo*) or a real person and patron of Luke.⁷⁰ Irenaeus (c. 180) is the first source we have that identifies the author as Luke, a companion of Paul (haer. 3, 1, 1), but this tradition of attribution might be much older.⁷¹ Not an author-name but rather #Theophilus, the recipient to whom the two works are dedicated, binds them together like a label. The author's self-confidence suggested by a prologue that is unique among the Gospels is thus limited. He remains anonymous, whereas his reader is named. The classificatory effect of the author-name is transferred to the reader's name.

4 Conclusion

The notion of authorship in antiquity was different than it is today. Especially holy texts were not deemed as having one single author who helps to explain their meaning by his special biographical context. Different stages of text production were an important part of authorship.

The theories of Foucault and Derrida are closer to notions of authorship in antiquity than the search for one single author and his or her intentions. To see author-names under the premise of iterability and as fulfilling certain functions within a certain discourse helps to get rid of moral judgments about pseudepigraphic texts and their authors, about originality and authenticity. Moreover, author-names can be described in their manifold functions. They do much more than open a gate for historical speculation. They proffer authority and undercut this same authority; they establish credibility and can be used by someone else besides the real writer and still maintain credibility; they classify texts bearing the same author-name and underline the differences of these same texts because they are seen as part of the same discourse. Like a hashtag, the written use of an author-name entails losing control over that same name, separation from its origin and placement within a referential system. That is why I hope that #authorfunctions can prompt an interesting discussion within exegetical discourse.

⁷⁰ Peter Pilhofer, *Das Neue Testament und seine Welt: Eine realgeschichtliche Einführung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 349.

⁷¹ Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 285.

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Dying and Rising with the Author: Specters of Paul and the Material Text

Gregory Peter Fewster

1 Introduction

“Paul is dead. Long live Paulinism!” – so begins, and ends, a recent reflection on the future of Pauline studies by Cavan Concannon.¹ Amid an ever-growing number of commentaries and other exegetical studies that invariably produce a “Paul” in the image of the interpreter – in spite of purporting to try to get the historical Paul “right” – Concannon’s exposé joins a number of recent voices (including my own) that finds that kind of study of Pauline writings to be fairly boring.² Concannon’s call evokes at once the late-medieval declaration of the death of a monarch and the simultaneous rise of his successor, but also the relatively more recent “death of the author” associated with such thinkers as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and sometimes Jacques Derrida. Even though these challenges to author-centered criticism emerged in the late 1970s, their adoption in Pauline studies and the broader study of early Christianity has been rather patchy, if not belated.³ To be sure, the emergence of canonical

1 Cavan W. Concannon, “Paul Is Dead. Long Live Paulinism! Imagining a Future for Pauline Studies,” *Ancient Jew Review* (2016), <http://www.ancientjewreview.com/articles/2016/11/1/paul-is-dead-long-live-paulinism-imagining-a-future-for-pauline-studies>, 2017/05/11.

2 In addition to Concannon’s article, see Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Gregory Peter Fewster, “Hermeneutical Issues in Canonical Pseudepigrapha,” in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Gregory Peter Fewster, *Pauline Studies* 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 89–111; Gregory Peter Fewster, “Can I Have Your Autograph? On Thinking about Pauline Authorship and Pseudepigraphy,” *BSOR* 43, no. 3 (2014): 32–41, doi:10.1558/bsor.v43i3.30.

3 Scholars of late antique Christianity have been attuned to Foucault for much longer than scholars of Christian origins because of his invocation of Jerome’s principles of authorship attribution. It is also worth noting that most of these works interact primarily with Foucault and rarely with Barthes. In addition to my articles cited above, note also the few gestures to the “death of the author” in Frederick W. Norris, “Black Marks on the Communities’ Manuscripts,” *J ECS* 2, no. 4 (2009): 459–460, doi:10.1353/earl.o.0206; Mark Vessey, “The Forging of Orthodoxy in Latin Christian Literature: A Case Study,” *J ECS* 4, no. 4 (1996): 506–507, doi:10.1353/earl.1996.0077; Jed Wyrick, *The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon*

criticism and reception studies may be symptomatic of the theoretical shift that includes “death of the author” criticism and postmodern literary theories more generally.⁴ But the fact that Concannon can still call for the “death of Paul” (i.e., Pauline exegesis of numerous stripes) in late 2016 signals Pauline scholarship’s large-scale resistance to that particular kind of reflexive theorizing, if not a more simple rejection of it. Pauline scholars are not alone in this.

The pronouncement of the author’s death by Roland Barthes and other poststructuralists provoked an entire sub-discourse in literary scholarship that attempted to refine or discourage literary analyses without the author. Among these detractors, some scholars have marshalled an interesting strategy; they invoke a trope of “resurrection” or “return from death” to suggest the continued

Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian Traditions, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 49 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004); Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 3; Bradley H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50–54; Michael J. Kok, *The Gospel on the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015), 171; Laura Salah Nasrallah, “Out of Love for Paul: History and Fiction in the Afterlife of the Apostle Paul,” in *Early Christian Narrative and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms*, ed. Judith Perkins and Ilaria L. E. Ramelli (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 75–76; Karen L. King, “What Is an Author?” Ancient Author-Function in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Apocalypse of John*,” in *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus’ Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*, ed. William E. Arnal et al., BETL 285 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 15–42.

- 4 Canonical criticism attempts to interpret Pauline writings with canonical form rather than authorial intention as their authority for interpretation. See Robert W. Wall, “Ecumenicity and Ecclesiology: The Promise of the Multiple Letter Canon of the New Testament,” in *The New Testament as Canon: A Reader in Canonical Criticism*, ed. Robert W. Wall and Eugene E. Lemcio, JSNTSup 76 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 197–202; Robert W. Wall, “The Function of the Pastoral Letters within the Pauline Canon of the New Testament: A Canonical Approach,” in *The Pauline Canon*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Pauline Studies 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 27–44; Brevard S. Childs, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Reception studies are far more diverse but explore the various ways in which the figure of Paul and the content of his letters were appropriated and used by later (esp. second century) Christian writers. See, for example, Martinus de Boer, “Images of Paul in the Post-Apostolic Period,” *CBQ* 42, no. 3 (1980): 359–380, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43714939>; Michael Kaler, “Towards an Expanded Understanding of Nag Hammadi Paulinism,” *SR* 33, no. 3–4 (2004): 301–317, doi: 10.1177/000842980403300302; Daniel Marguerat, “Paul après Paul: Une Histoire de Réception,” *NTS* 54, no. 3 (2008): 317–337, doi: 10.1017/S0028688508000167; Judith M. Lieu, “The Battle for Paul in the Second Century,” *ITQ* 75, no. 1 (2010): 3–14, doi: 10.1177/0021140009353120; Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson, eds., *Paul and the Second Century*, LNTS 412 (London: T&T Clark, 2011); White, *Remembering Paul*; Jennifer R. Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect: The Use of the Pauline Epistles by Early Christian Writers*, Studies of the Bible and its Reception 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015).

significance of the figure of the author for textual interpretation. While the precise content and goals of these arguments differ, their rhetorical positioning seems to play on the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, as well as being indebted to a perceived parallel between the “death of the author” and the “death of God.”⁵ Concannon’s call of “Paul is dead!” brings the question of Pauline authorship alongside the existing pairing of God and the author more generally.⁶ My essay here pursues the possibilities that death and resurrection tropes, entangled in discourses about religion and textuality, present for the continued study of texts attributed to Paul.

Discourses on God or the author reveal what theorists like Derrida have argued elsewhere: Things that die do not stay dead; instead they haunt. This is also true of the figures in antiquity that we sometimes call authors. As I will explore in the first half of this essay, theologians and literary theorists alike continue to argue that God and the author did not die as secure a death as their eulogizers proclaim. God and the author loom over studies about secularism or textual analysis, as their theorists grapple with concepts such as creativity, intentionality and the control of meaning. Haunting, I argue, is both a category that emerges quite naturally from discourses on death and resurrection and a fitting description of the features of those discourses on God and the author that just will not go away. The category of haunting helps to revise especially the way we might understand the place of intentionality in textual analysis. I argue in the latter half of this essay that authors haunt texts attributed to them. These authorial specters are materialized through the actions of editors and copyists in the production of physical text-objects. Interpreting Paul can be productively accomplished through the analysis of extant Pauline texts as material, cultural artifacts, which includes attention to the degree to which their material and discursive structures conjure up the figure of Paul. I explore these dynamics with the analysis of P. Vindob. G 26034 + 30453 and Codex Coislinianus (H^p, 015). On both sixth-century manuscripts of Paul are inscribed

5 The concept of the “death of God” is of course famously associated with Friedrich Nietzsche. See, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1882), 153–155.

6 Concannon is interested (among other things) in Pauline reception and its impact on presenting a particular “Paul,” what Concannon calls “Paulology.” His reliance here on Foucault is clear: “Paulologies direct us back to the work of what authors do in presenting and citing Paul, following Foucault’s concept of an ‘author-function.’ Rather than blithely assuming that we can use our sharp historical tools to get back to *the* historical Paul, we should give up on that particular ghost and read all of the Pauline archive as exercises in Pauline (self-) presentation.” (Concannon, “Paul Is Dead.”).

two very different kinds of Pauline text-objects, and both are haunted by very different authorial configurations.

2 “Death of the Author” and the “Death of God”

2.1 *God’s Death and the Author’s Death in Barthes and Foucault*

Critical discourse about authorship frequently asserts a connection between the author and God. For Barthes and Foucault, this connection does not have positive implications, but the metaphor serves their rhetorical purposes well by setting up a provocative and illustrative trope upon which to build and to display the negative aspects of previous ideas about authorship. Although some subsequent writers hesitate to buy into the precise contours of his authorial eulogy, the connection Barthes draws between the author and God reverberates throughout the reception of Barthes and can be seen as a parallel to the death of God. Barthes attributes to his predecessors in literary theory what he calls the “Author-God” as the beginning and end of textual meaning, as both the originator of meaning (a transcendental signifier)⁷ and as the “final signified.”⁸ His authorial apotheosis implicates the critic, who joins the Author-God in the hegemonic control of the production of meaning. In this sense, the critic claims theological authority.⁹ Instead, for Barthes, textual unity resides not in the divine (the transcendent before and after the text) but in the destination of a work – the reader. Whereas Barthes does not make much effort to distinguish his reader from his critic, the way in which he frames the significance of the reader is important: “[T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author.”¹⁰ The deification of the author thus becomes just a piece of what I see as a more overriding metaphor, carving out a pathway

7 See Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 22, who maps Derrida’s language of the “transcendental signified” onto Barthes’ Author-God.

8 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 147. Burke describes this as divine omnipresence. Burke, *Death and Return*, 22.

9 Barthes’ Author-God resembles aspects of Derrida’s discussion of the authorial signature (more on this below). For Derrida, signing as an author is an impossible task without a guarantor of authorial identity – an ultimate signer – whom he calls God. Jacques Derrida, “Declarations of Independence,” in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971–2001*, ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 51–52.

10 Barthes, “Death of the Author,” 148. On the other hand, the critic is the one who claims to have apprehended the divine author’s intention.

for subsequent theorizing.¹¹ That metaphor is resurrection, or new birth. For Barthes, the object of this birth is the reader. For theorists that follow, it is something else.

While Foucault's author-theorizing is frequently linked closely with Barthes', Foucault seems wary of Barthes' announcement of the author's death and proceeds to articulate ways in which the author functions for contemporary critics as a limit to extravagances of interpretation, looking forward to a time when the author no longer figures into a hermeneutical agenda.¹² Thus, Foucault anticipates a semiotics of transgression and creativity predicated upon detecting ruptures of signification rather than upon a return to ordered, scientific, linguistic paradigms.¹³ On the other hand, Foucault echoes Barthes' concern for the hegemonic pairing of author and critic and attributes literary criticism's author fetish to an early Christian canon-consciousness.¹⁴ The author does not mimic the divine attribute of creative genius. But as a "principle of thrift," it is a unifying feature that smoothes over contradiction and aporia.

For both Foucault and Barthes, the connection between the author, God and particular Christian discourses is inescapable. At the same time, this connection contains the ingredients for some sort of reconstituted author – at least someone to take the author's place.

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- 11 Notably, Burke argues that Barthes' theological author was something of a missed target at the time of his writing (or at least a retreating one), citing several contemporaneous theorists who were delineating authorship along different lines, for instance, Bakhtin's dialogical author. Burke, *Death and Return*, 24–25. In a similar vein, New Criticism, whose anti-intentional impulse mirrored (or anticipated) Barthes' "death of the author," maintained a strongly theological rhetoric. See Roger Seamon, "Theocratism: The Religious Rhetoric of Academic Interpretation," *Philosophy and Literature* 21, no. 2 (1997): 319–331, doi:10.1353/phl.1997.0058.
 - 12 Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141–160. However, this anticipation is diminished by anticipating another limiting factor to take the author's place (160).
 - 13 A. L. Stein argues that Foucault's sensibility here is a religious one, insofar as it reverses an Enlightenment semiotics that excluded mystery and chaos in favor of order. But it is not a religious impulse that simply reinscribes a pre-Enlightenment semiotics based on Ultimate form (God). See, A. L. Stein, "Literature and Language after the Death of God," *Hist. Eur. Ideas* 11, no. 1–6 (1989): 794, doi:10.1016/0191-6599(89)90267-2; cf. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 149–159, in which Foucault reverses previous historical scholarship's aims of coherence with an analysis of discourse on the basis of contradiction.
 - 14 Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 150–151. He is especially interested in Jerome's criteria for determining a text's authorial authenticity.

2.2 *Critical Connections of God and the Author*

Recently, Seán Burke and William Irwin have drawn a connection between the “death of the author” and the “death of God,” such that it plays off what Burke calls “residual antitheology.”¹⁵ However, Burke goes on to argue that the comparison between God and the author is not necessarily an accurate one. Whereas God inevitably conjures up notions of purpose, first causes and omnipotence, Burke is able to point out non-theological conceptions of the author with relative ease.¹⁶ Regardless, the rhetoric of anti-authorial discourse – more so than its precision – is suggestive of its consequences. Both the religious overtones established in Barthes’ essay and the explicit connection between the “death of God” and the “death of the author” by subsequent theorists invite analysis of the ongoing struggle to resurrect what has been pronounced dead.

3 Resurrection Tropes and the Language of Return

3.1 *Western Intellectual Traditions and the Religious Turn*

Secularism, in the way Talal Asad understands it to be a “political doctrine,” promotes the retreat of the religious realm to private practice or interior belief, replacing the obligation of religion with the option of religion.¹⁷ According to Asad’s account, the continued presence of religion within spheres intended to be secular is an anomaly either celebrated or bemoaned, depending on one’s affinity with the political doctrine of secularism. On the one hand, the “resurgence of religion” that Asad notes refers to the persistence of religion within the sphere of everyday human activity.¹⁸ On the other, Elizabeth Castelli de-

15 Burke, *Death and Return*, 21–25. Burke also suggests that the deaths of God and the author share resistance to “authority, presence, intention, omniscience, and creativity.” Additionally, Irwin notes that in the same way that the “death of God” incited praise and rejection from atheists and theologians, respectively, the “death of the author” invites both resistance from intentionalists and a “springboard” for poststructuralists. See Irwin’s preface to William Irwin, ed., *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002). Cf. Foucault’s own comment that “it is not enough to keep repeating (after Nietzsche) that God and man have died a common death.” Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 145.

16 See Burke, *Death and Return*, 24.

17 See Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); also John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America: With Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines, and Their Metaphors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1–48.

18 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 1. This resurgence is so prevalent that Derrida claims to see it “proclaimed in every newspaper.” Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar

scribes a “religious turn,” in which the disciplines of the purportedly secular academy have begun to reincorporate religion and religious topics into their social and political theorizing.¹⁹

This ostensible return to religion in general features a return to theology as an unsurprising (though not inevitable) corollary. Holding that secularism is coterminous with liberalism and its free market, and in the face of a perceived dissolution of a sacred-secular divide, postsecular thinkers refuse to embrace both the secularist rejection of the Christian God and traditional views of God (especially those characteristic of relatively more recent American evangelicalism).²⁰ Postsecularism benefits from the western intellectual tradition wrestling with a religious qua theological heritage that, in the act of distancing itself from that heritage, necessarily inscribes religion within its

(New York: Routledge, 2002), 43. Citing works by Asad and John Milbank, Hent de Vries suggests that this kind of activity does not mark a wholesale return to religion, nor does it pick out buried religious themes that heretofore went unrecognized. Religion is not the hidden underside of secular discourse, but its persistence is a necessary corollary of secularism's rejection of religion. Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 2. Cf. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

- 19 Elizabeth A. Castelli, “What’s the Difference? Religion and the Question of Theory,” *differences* 21, no. 1 (2010): 124–128, doi: 10.1215/10407391-2009-021. See also Victoria Barker, “After the Death of God: Postsecularity?” *JRH* 33, no. 1 (2009): 82, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9809.2009.00748.x. This sort of description appropriately treats religion not as a natural phenomenon ubiquitous in human culture, but rather as a category used by academics who find “religion” somewhat useful for capturing an assemblage of social and material practices and beliefs. Jonathan Z. Smith is particularly prominent among those who point out the construction of the category of religion in the academy. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 179.193–194. Brent Nongbri highlights “religion” as a redescriptive category rather than a purely descriptive one. Brent Nongbri, “Dislodging ‘Embedded’ Religion: A Brief Note on a Scholarly Trope,” *Numen* 55, no. 4 (2008): 440–460, doi: 10.1163/156852708X310527. He aims his critique at the study of religion in antiquity. However, analogous issues appear when one leaves the boundaries of Western Christianity, and the term “religion” loses its explanatory power or constructs other cultures in the image of Christianity and incorporates a religious-secular divide. See, for example, Timothy Fitzgerald, “A Critique of ‘Religion’ as a Cross-Cultural Category,” *MTSR* 9, no. 2 (1997): 91–110, doi: 10.1163/157006897X00070; Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jason A. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

- 20 See Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology: Religion and Politics after Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 2–9.

rhetoric and argumentation. As Hent de Vries puts it, “as [religion] dies an ever more secure and serial death, it is increasingly certain to come back to life, in its present guise or another.”²¹ Running parallel to postsecularism’s rethinking of the “death of God,” authorship theory after the author’s death operates analogously to this interesting critical ambivalence towards religion.

The expectation that a slain God will pass through death to new life figures prominently in Christian theologizing and self-understanding.²² And given the conceptual parallels between God and the author, it is not surprising that themes of resurrection frame some critics’ responses to “death of the author” theory. Resurrection language is recognizable in at least three such works published within the last 20 years. Oddly enough, they anticipate responses to the “death of God” noted above. A postsecular religious turn makes ample use of the resurrection trope, using the language of rebirth as it wrestles with the politics of an intersection of potentially conflicting disciplinary orientations.²³ For now, I will engage those works dedicated to bringing about the author’s return, exploring the persistence of the figure of the author in the wake of its proclaimed death.²⁴ And I will show how fraught interests in historicizing the

21 de Vries, *Turn*, 3.

22 Resurrection, especially the resurrection of a god, is not an exclusively Christian notion. Many studies are quick to point out the religious and cultural heritage to which Christian expressions are indebted. E.g., see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 107–123; Stanley E. Porter, “Resurrection, the Greeks and the New Testament,” in *Resurrection*, ed. Stanley E. Porter et al., JSNTSup 186 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 52–81, who elaborates on some Greco-Roman expectations of the afterlife; cf. Nicholas T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 85–205, who rejects these antecedents in favor of so-called Jewish ones. Alternatively, non-Christian claims to resurrection are frequently filtered through a western Christian lens, lending themselves to apologetic comparison, as in Gary R. Habermas, “Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Literature,” *RelS* 25, no. 2 (1989): 167–177, doi: 10.1017/S0034412500001785. Whether or not such comparison is valid is not the point, but rather that Christian expectations regarding resurrection can provoke fundamental questions and obfuscate individual features of the respective religions. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 77–107, is especially apropos on this point. At any rate, in Western academia, Christian ideas about resurrection are paradigmatic, circumscribing connections between death, return, God and religion.

23 See Barker, “After the Death of God,” 82–95; Mary-Jane Rubenstein, “The Rebirth of the Death of God: Radical Theology Politicized, Political Theology Radicalized, and Radical Politics Theologized in the Work of Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey Robbins,” *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2012): 273–281, doi: 10.1179/ccp.4.2.2123765876147715.

24 Burke, *Death and Return*; Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Resurrecting the Author,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2003): 4–24, doi: 10.1111/1475-4975.00069; Irwin, *Death and*

slain author and in a reconstituted intentionalism can actually prove useful for thinking about attributed texts and their interpretation.

3.2 *The Romantic Author and a Slippery Intellectual Heritage*

Critics of Roland Barthes, in particular, and Michel Foucault, secondarily, quickly seize on their inaccurate representations of author theory before poststructuralism. Barthes' attempt to outline a trajectory of incipient anti-authorialism in the Romantic period itself is met with some resistance by Burke, who calls it "palpably false."²⁵ If Burke is correct, Barthes and Foucault's sloppy historicizing exposes their own work to potentially damning critique. But it also prefigures the way in which subsequent theorists have engaged the history of authorship theory from their vantage point. This is rather telling with regard to the attempt to define "the author" and thus bring about a fully-fledged resurrection or return.

Burke is one of several theorists who question the reality of the Romantic author, precisely that which the likes of Barthes and Foucault were interested in putting aside. In fact, Burke argues that the Romantic author (Barthes' Author-God), as such, needed to be a construct worth killing. Thus, the tyrannical author so heavily demonized is nothing but a requisite caricature for Barthes' new theories of semiotics and writing.²⁶ Rather than discounting Barthes' anti-authorialism, Burke details the difficulties inherent in Barthes' ideas about authorship and writing and how they continue to haunt his autobiographical work especially.²⁷ The ability to maintain a strict anti-authorialism is

Resurrection. Other engagements with theories about the author will also be considered where relevant.

25 Burke, *Death and Return*, 8; cf. Barthes, "Death of the Author," 143–144; and to a lesser degree Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 142. In spite of his rather abrupt dismissal of this proposed heritage, Burke situates both Barthes and Foucault in relation to Russian formalism and the structural semiotics within which these thinkers were trained. They proposed that the underlying structures of language reduce the need for a creative subject to arrange them in meaningful ways. Or, perhaps more importantly, interpretation relies on the uncovering of linguistic structures such that it does not require recourse to a creative agent; Burke, *Death and Return*, 9–15. Burke admits "that all intellectual history is post factum" (8), which is an important point to consider as we see how Irwin and Wolterstorff contextualize their own work.

26 Burke, *Death and Return*, 25–26. See also, Wolterstorff, "Resurrecting the Author," 8–9. Lamarque resists debating Barthes' claims about the Romantic author but retains some suspicion as to their accuracy. Peter Lamarque, "The Death of the Author: An Analytical Autopsy," in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* ed. William Irwin, Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 81.

27 See Burke, *Death and Return*, 50–59.

evidently a difficult task, similar to secular discourse's ironically antagonistic reinscription of religion.

Alternatively, Andrew Bennett prefers to give Barthes and Foucault a little more credit for their historicizing and revisits some discourses of the Romantic period in order to investigate the extent to which notions of autonomy and originality connect with Romantic conceptions of authorship. Romantic ideals, so Bennett argues, simultaneously consist of notions of autonomy and genius, while they also ascribe value to impersonal aesthetics and a disinterested subjectivity.²⁸ Taking both Burke's and Bennett's observations together, we start to get a sense that both the Romantic author and the dead author are unsustainable on the basis of an inherent instability and multiplicity of authorial theorizing. The instability of authorship, according to Burke, is perhaps not a problem with "the author" per se, rather but with the limits of theory itself to appropriately establish boundaries and definitions.²⁹ Fluctuation is an inescapable corollary of theorizing about the author, and this fluctuation is precisely how Burke conceives of the author's death and return. The significance of this move will be pursued below.

3.3 *Intentionalist Re-constructions*

William Irwin attempts to move beyond the author's death, made clear by the arrangement of his multi-authored collection *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* The first section engages the so-called "death of the author," whereas the second section includes proposals for thinking about the author in ways not confined by the legacies of Barthes or Foucault. The resurrection claims of Irwin's contributors are not univocal, but they do evince a general dissatisfaction with the precise terms with which Barthes, Foucault and others express their anti-authorialism and anti-intentionalism.³⁰ Cheryl Walker, for example, looks at the way that feminist critics have more recently affirmed Barthes and Foucault by claiming that authorship, as it is traditionally conceived, is a site

28 Andrew Bennett, *The Author*, *The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2005), 55–56; cf. Seán Burke, "Introduction: Reconstructing the Author," in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), xvi–xxv. Burke suggests that the "death of the author" was the next step in the impasse of the transcendental and the impersonal that arose in modernism, xxiv.

29 Burke, *Death and Return*, 180–184. Again, this connects with the difficulty that theories of secularization have with what appears like a resurgence of religion.

30 Irwin states that the contour of the book is meant to lead the reader through the works of Barthes and Foucault and a few sympathizers and towards the promotion of newly constituted author-constructs in the service of intentionalism. Irwin, *Death and Resurrection*, xii.

at which patriarchal forms of domination can persist.³¹ Although she explicitly desires to “reanimate the author,” Walker does this by suggesting that the complete erasure of authorial subjectivity occurs at the expense of oppressing female authorial voices. For Walker, a politics of reading rather than a theory of reading may be a better way of addressing the ethical implications of the author’s death.³² Jorge Gracia affirms comparable political and ethical gestures but prioritizes a politics of reading that attempts to map readers’ constructions of an author onto a historical author as accurately as possible.³³ Such essays serve as a midway point in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* and lead to more intentionalist-oriented engagements, such as that towards which Gracia points. Irwin’s organizational strategy does not present a univocal resurrection of the author so much as it facilitates a cogent but multifaceted defense of intentionalism.

Irwin’s own effort at resurrecting the author balances a commitment to re-constructing authorial intentions and a recognition that readers can never fully apprehend a biography, context or intention of a historical author. According to Irwin, by assembling bits of biographical information, information gleaned from other texts written by that author and information about the audience or context of writing, interpreters construct and reconstruct an author and their intentions.³⁴ The concept of this constructed author is predicated upon

31 Cheryl Walker, “Feminist Literary Criticism and the Author,” in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* ed. William Irwin, Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 141–143. See also Seán Burke, “Feminism and the Authorial Subject,” in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 145–149. In contrast, Miller argues that the “death of the author” – as a male subject – does not affect female subjectivity in the same way, insofar as female identity has had no historical basis in origins, production or institutions. For Miller, female subjectivity is in a state of emergence. Nancy K. Miller, “Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing and the Reader,” in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 196–197, 206–207.

32 Walker, “Feminist Literary Criticism,” 156–157. Walker arrives at this conclusion in part because she attends to the reasons why Barthes was interested in the author’s death, not simply the coherence or strength of the argument itself. This makes her essay one of the stronger contributions to the volume, as I will articulate below.

33 See Jorge J. E. Gracia, “A Theory of the Author,” in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* ed. William Irwin, Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 181–185. Gracia refers to this construction as the pseudo-historical author. Terminological precision is crucial in Gracia’s schema, insofar as the inability to distinguish between the historical author and pseudo-historical constructions can lead to repressive readings.

34 In relation to the historical author, Irwin calls this constructed author the “urauthor.” See William Irwin, “Intentionalism and Author Constructs,” in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002),

a sense that intentions are difficult to determine (even for the author himself or herself), paired with a hermeneutical idealism that favors the interpreters' general desire to apprehend intentions, however difficult they are to uncover. Irwin's author is therefore a constructed means through which the author's intentions can be apprehended, intentions that comprise the "one meaning to be sought in interpretation."³⁵

A careful historical criticism underlies Irwin's desired interpretive procedure, yet he unwittingly gestures to intentionalities that exceed the author *per se*. Textual interpretation, insofar as Irwin formulates it, begins with pre-reflective assumptions about the type of person who composed a given text (e.g., that they were rational).³⁶ These assumptions are so general that they do not actually suggest anything useful about an author or their intentions. Instead, as Adrian Johns argues, many of the assumptions that readers bring to the reading and trusting of a text derive from the often neglected collective labor of a text's producers.³⁷ Textual interpretation, conceived of as the solitary discernment of authorial intention built upon preliminary and pre-reflective assumptions about the author, ignores the very labor that conditions the interpreter's ability to make assumptions about an author and about authorship more generally.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, like Irwin, understands intentionality to be a necessary condition of authorship. However, in performing the author's resurrection, Wolterstorff privileges the author themselves over questions of text and textuality, claiming that orthodox textual interpretation operates as an act done to an artifact or text by an interpreter (Irwin's procedure being a case in point); Wolterstorff promotes the view that interpretation is an act directed towards a writing human that is *mediated* by a text. What Wolterstorff calls "authorial discourse interpretation" is grounded in a privileging of an author's desire to communicate intentions that simultaneously positions text as incidental to communication.³⁸ It is important to stress that Wolterstorff's interest

193–195; and further William Irwin, *Intentionalist Interpretation: A Philosophical Explanation and Defense* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999). The extent to which this prescription fits with traditional (and evangelical) modes of biblical interpretation, for example, is striking. See Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 37–39.

35 Irwin, "Intentionalism," 196.

36 *Ibid.*, 195.

37 Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1–57.

38 Wolterstorff, "Resurrecting the Author," 22–24. Wolterstorff acknowledges that an author's intention does not limit what a text might mean, but he is not concerned with the potential meanings of a text. Alternative meanings are a feature of what he terms "performance

lies with hermeneutics and communication more than with the figure of the author, but this results in a sort of taking for granted of what constitutes authorship. This stands in contrast to the type of inquiry – typified by many of the contributions to Irwin’s volume – prompted by Foucault’s famous question “What is an Author?” and his observation that not every text necessarily has an author.³⁹

The resurrection that Wolterstorff seeks counters the efforts of the wave of twentieth-century critics, who sought meaning in the structures of textuality rather than in the intentions of the author.⁴⁰ In spite of Wolterstorff’s explicit debt to the title “The Death of the Author,” Barthes and Foucault are not fully responsible for the “death of the author.”⁴¹ Rather, their work is symptomatic of a text-centricity reflected also in the Gadamerian and structuralist hermeneutics and the notion of the “intentional fallacy” with which Wolterstorff engages at length.⁴²

Intentionality of authors emerges as a primary concern for Irwin and his colleagues, as well as for Wolterstorff. However, in each of these accounts, the relation differs significantly between intentionality, the author and the text,

interpretation,” in which certain types of readers might read for particular types of meaning. Wolterstorff’s contention is that performance interpretation is not the usual mode of interpretation. Irwin actually distinguishes between meaning and significance. Meaning is attributed to the intentions of the author, whereas making significance is what readers do with a text that extends beyond the author’s meaning. Irwin, “Intentionalism,” 196.

39 Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 147–148. Similar to Barthes’ connection between author and critic, Foucault’s author is an attitude that readers adopt towards a text, perhaps for the purpose of biography or semantic control. See also Alexander Nehamas, “Writer, Text, Work, Author,” in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* ed. William Irwin, Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 98.

40 As does Jochen Flebbe’s contribution to this volume.

41 See Wolterstorff, “Resurrecting the Author,” 4, note 1. Wolterstorff’s only engagement with Barthes (and Derrida) concerns the connection they draw between ideas of authorial intention and individualist capitalist ideology, which he discounts by arguing that their focus on texts rather than authors of text is itself a symptom of capitalist tendencies of commodification. *Ibid.*, 8–10, 18. Wolterstorff does not engage Foucault’s work at all.

42 See Wolterstorff, “Resurrecting the Author,” 5–17. An alternative engagement of Gadamer’s hermeneutics and the question of intentionality can be found in David Weberman, “Gadamer’s Hermeneutics and the Question of Authorial Intention,” in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* ed. William Irwin, Contributions in Philosophy 83 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 45–64. Weberman argues that Gadamer is only somewhat anti-intentionalist. A faithful reading of Gadamer’s interest in the historical context of the reader allows for intentionalism to function more or less on the basis of the type of text being read. This point partially echoes Wolterstorff’s emphasis on everyday author-oriented reading strategies but does not imply a preference between differing text-dependent strategies.

as does their level of engagement with the authorship theories of Barthes and Foucault. As anticipated by Burke, Irwin and Wolterstorff both want to revive the author, but they seem to differ with respect to the cause of the death, the means of resurrection and what the resurrected author should look like.

4 The Author: Not Quite Dead, Not Quite Reborn

The arguments against “death of the author” theory should not surprise scholars interested in discourses about the return to religion. Regarding religion in particular, de Vries notes that the language of return has the potential to imply that there is some “thing” called religion that has survived its subjection to historicizing and critical disruption.⁴³ Indeed, this tendency occurs analogously in the contributions to author theory by Irwin, Wolterstorff, Gracia and others, on the basis of their attempts to revive a conception of the author that they consider the likes of Barthes and Foucault to have misguidedly killed. But even as much recent scholarship has destabilized the universality and ubiquity of “religion,” rigorous historicizing of the Romantic (arguably the prototypical) author suggests analogous instabilities.⁴⁴ And, as I suggested above, some attempts at the author’s resuscitation are rather ghastly. The trope of dying and rising is an accurate turn of phrase in this case, as it hints at an “experience of trauma” over the author’s unsatisfactory demise.⁴⁵

My analysis of theorizing the “death of the author” reveals important and recurring features. As Burke argues, theory itself has the inability to fully circumscribe the author. Critics disagree concerning how accurate Barthes and Foucault are in their description of the Romantic author they desire to move beyond. And critics disagree further concerning what theoretical movements caused the author’s death and what sort of author should be resurrected. Consequently, the author has enjoyed a ghastly and imperfect resurrection. The remainder of this essay takes the ghastly resurrection of the author as a launching point for further reflection on the relationship between authorship, textuality and intentionality. Joining these concerns, I will take the opportunity to interpret Paul in two sixth-century manuscripts, both of which present divergences in material form, textual selection and appearance and investment in the authorial figure of Paul.

43 de Vries, *Turn*, 8.

44 See note 19 on theorizing “religion.”

45 de Vries, *Turn*, 9.

4.1 *The Spectral Author*

It might seem strange that by this point I have barely mentioned Jacques Derrida in connection with the author, in spite of his frequent inclusion in the anti-authorial camp. Whereas Derrida's treatment of authorship appears less pointed and direct than Barthes' or Foucault's, the way in which he engages the topic allows us to more fully address the resurrection trope. On one hand, Derrida's interest in authorship emerges as anti-intentionalist, insofar as he argues against John L. Austin's supposition that the signature is a means of guaranteeing authorial intentions.⁴⁶ However, Derrida's critique is not a wholesale rejection of authorial presence in the signature. While a "pure" signature might completely bind a piece of writing to the signer, another crucial characteristic of the signature is its repeatability, thus its ability to be detached from the signer.⁴⁷ Pure signatures are, therefore, impossible, since detachment and complete presence are contradictory. As Stanley Fish reminds us, even the immediate and physical presence of an author is not enough to guarantee the safe transmission of authorial intention.⁴⁸ However, this tension between authorial presence and absence is what enables the signature to function as a marker of authorship.⁴⁹

Does theorizing the authorial signature settle the dispute? Is the author alive or dead? Bennett's frustration in this regard is palpable, and understandable. He observes that the polarization of this debate over life or death obscures the fact that the author's centrality in criticism is a function of his or her tangible ineffability.⁵⁰ Scholars remain fascinated by the author because they cannot produce a universal definition. Derrida's signature helps us think through this polarity, implying that the author's death and rebirth are never quite complete. The question of resurrection or even return is thus somewhat awkward if the author never fully died. However, as with the return to religion, the return of the author persists in the sway of its own historicizing, criticism and murder.

The ineffability of the author, that is, critics' inability to fully kill it and proponents' incapacity to fully bring it back, casts the author as a ghostly figure:

46 Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977), 13–20; echoed in Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 24–25; cf. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 60–61.

47 See Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 20.

48 Stanley Fish, "With the Compliments of the Author: Reflections on Austin and Derrida," *CI* 8, no. 4 (1982): 699–703, doi: 10.1086/448177. This is a point that is consistently missed and that destabilizes the arguments of those who wish to focus on everyday or face-to-face types of discourse, e.g., Wolterstorff, "Resurrecting the Author," 16.

49 For a discussion of Paul's signature, see Clarissa Breu, in this volume, 139–140.

50 Bennett, *Author*, 66.

intangible, spectral, haunting. Authorship is, to use the language of Avery Gordon, a “ghostly matter.”⁵¹ Spectrality itself is quintessential Derrida, another way of describing the simultaneous presence and absence of the author, articulated previously by the signature and indeed played out in the authorial debates of the last few decades.⁵² Spectrality is an appropriate way of describing the author as the subject of critical discourse. I want to suggest, however, that theorizing about the author lingers, partly because it is difficult to talk about texts and their interpretation without using the language of authorship. Whether or not we think we can or should apprehend authorial intentions, the names of authors of texts persist and mediate readers’ experiences of text-objects even from beyond the authors’ graves.⁵³

If we have learned anything from the author debates, however, it is that conceptions of authorship are not universal. This raises the question of whether or not attributing a spectral quality to authors simply reinscribes another universality. Scholars such as Hindy Najman and Jed Wyrick have for some time been reminding historians of Mediterranean antiquity that “authorship” is itself a modern category and has the potential to seriously skew the way in which we understand ancient practices of composition and attribution.⁵⁴ Alongside the ongoing pursuit to discern particularly ancient understandings of composition, agency and textuality, I offer the spectral author as a redescriptive term

51 See Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), esp. 3–28.

52 Introduced in his published lectures “Specters of Marx,” Derrida uses the figure of the ghost or specter along with a notion of hauntology (rather than ontology) to talk about the way in which Karl Marx and Marxism could continue to have intellectual integrity and utility even after the fall of Communism in the late 1980s. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994). See also discussion of the emergence of “hauntology” in critical theory in Martha Lincoln and Bruce Lincoln, “Toward a Critical Hauntology: Bare Afterlife and the Ghosts of Ba Chúc,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 1 (2015): 191–220, doi: 10.1017/S0010417514000644.

53 Clarissa Breu’s contribution to this volume about author-names comes to a similar conclusion.

54 Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, JSJSup 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–16. Najman explicitly draws from Foucault’s “What Is an Author?” to claim that modern conceptions of authorship have histories and are thus not universally applicable. Jed Wyrick takes this claim seriously in his lengthy study that traces historical developments in Hebrew scribal practice and Greek practices of attribution. He identifies that late antique Christianity marks a pivot in understandings of attribution and textual production, which begin to resemble something much closer to the modern, intentioned author. Wyrick, *Ascension*.

that has some analytical purchase when interpreting particular sets of text.⁵⁵ Texts in antiquity were frequently attributed and ancient scholars were interested in issues of attribution and detecting false attribution.⁵⁶ Even more so, attributed texts and their copies – as material objects – persisted long after the death of their purported “author.” This is certainly the case with texts that were attributed to Paul. In fact, the only Pauline texts currently extant are copies of letters attributed to him from a century or more after his death. I aim to explore the extent to which and in what way Paul haunts the material texts attributed to him even after his death.⁵⁷

4.2 *Materialized Intentionalities and the Spectral Paul*

Intentionality persists as one of the major points of concern for critics of “death of the author” theory. Whereas I suggest that attempts by Irwin and Wolterstorff

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- 55 I am imagining studies such as Najman's ongoing project to consider Jewish pseudepigrapha and other attributional writings as “founders of discourses,” Derek Krueger's exploration of late antique writers' experiments to fashion a particularly Christian mode of authorship or Eva Mroczek's study of early Jewish correlated conceptions of scribal channels and textual fluidity. See Hindy Najman, *Past Renewals: Interpretive Authority, Renewed Revelation and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity*, JSJSup 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Najman, *Seconding Sinai*; Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*; Eva Mroczek, “Moses, David and Scribal Revelation: Preservation and Renewal in Second Temple Jewish Textual Traditions,” in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke et al., TBN 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 91–115; Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 56 See especially Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). Eric Scherbenske also considers the question of authorial authenticity to have been the *sine qua non* of ancient editorial practice. Eric W. Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul: Ancient Editorial Practice and the Corpus Paulinum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 15–54.
- 57 Adapting Derrida's “specters” has already been suggested in Pauline studies. In 2011 Benjamin Dunning published *Specters of Paul*, exploring the way in which Pauline discourse about sexual difference was received and adapted by later Christian writers. However, Dunning's interest resides in the way in which ambiguities in Paul's discourse about sexuality (i.e., lacking a clear articulation of Eve and the significance of the female body) are never fully resolved by Paul's interpreters. See Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Neither should I neglect to mention the work of Cavan Concannon, who uses the notion of spectrality in his account of the ways in which Paul's early (and now long-dead) readers may have interpreted his discourses about ethnicity. Cavan W. Concannon, *“When You Were Gentiles”: Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence*, Synkrisis: Comparative Approaches to Early Christianity in Greco-Roman Culture (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

to revive an intentionalist authorial theory are relatively unconvincing, intentionality is not altogether useless when coordinated with an appreciation of the materiality of texts. In fact, materiality is one of the neglected, or at least implicit, elements of textuality within those discourses about authorship. Such neglect has been pointed out in a corrective argument directed towards anti-intentionalist theory by Oxford bibliographer Donald F. McKenzie. He was not a strict intentionalist, but he nevertheless exposes a curious misreading propagated in Wimsatt and Beardsley's "The Intentional Fallacy," which presents some valuable insights into the intersection of critical theory and a materialist approach to textuality.⁵⁸ "The Intentional Fallacy" offers the argument that critical recovery of the meaning of what an author wrote is neither achievable nor desirable. As McKenzie notes, Wimsatt and Beardsley's article begins with an excerpt of the Prologue to William Congreve's "The Way of the World," which appears to support their thesis that textual interpretation is the burden of the reader and not of the text's author. As an expert in bibliography, a discipline grounded in attention to the material forms of books, McKenzie notes that Wimsatt and Beardsley actually misread and thus misquote Congreve, in part because their reproduction of the epigram neglects to accurately reproduce elements of punctuation and orthography of the original edition.⁵⁹ Rather than leveraging this misreading as a full-blown criticism of anti-intentionalism, however, McKenzie uses this example to underscore the social life of texts in relation to their material instantiations.⁶⁰ True, Wimsatt and Beardsley's reproduction is incorrect, but both instantiations are material artifacts with contextually specific and historically interesting meanings.

Very much in the school of McKenzie, textual scholar Jerome J. McGann states that such variations in physical features of a text – what he calls

58 McKenzie claims a defense of "authorial meaning, on the grounds that it is in some measure recoverable, to the recognition that, for better or worse, readers inevitably make their own meanings." Donald F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 19. As we will see, McKenzie is far more interested in the history of readings than recovering authorial intention exclusively.

59 See *ibid.*, 18–27; cf. the epigram in William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 (1946): 54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27537676>. McKenzie does partially defend the authors by suggesting that their spelling error ("wrote" for "wrought") may have derived from the printing in George H. Nettleton and Arthur E. Case, eds., *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939).

60 Jerome J. McGann sees textual mutability (whether emerging through misreading or other means) as constitutive of textuality itself. This is what he calls the "textual condition." Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3,9.

“bibliographic codes” – evidence intentionalities stemming from the numerous human agents and their institutional contexts, which together participate in a text’s production, transmission and reception.⁶¹ As both McKenzie and McGann argue, authorial intentionality is not entirely a lost or irrelevant cause in textual study. But authorial intentionality is diffused throughout the material history of a text, along with the intentions of (in the case of printed texts) publishing houses, print technologies, scribes, designers, etc. It is not a far stretch to adapt this principle to ancient manuscript culture, which had its own apparatus of textual production and circulation.⁶² And these agents of ancient book culture contributed their own intentions, interests and technical skill to their craft. Within this disciplinary framework, criticism operates in relation to actual physical texts, with keen interest in material features of manuscript copies as materializations of these intentionalities and not as hypothesized autographs, as contemporary Pauline exegesis often does.⁶³

As sociological textual study has gained support within the field of bibliography itself, we can see parallels in the field of biblical textual criticism as well, where critics are increasingly interested in manuscripts as artifacts, whose variants may reflect the idiosyncrasies of a scribe and the culture in which they were embedded.⁶⁴ Whereas McKenzie tends not to be suspicious

61 See esp. *Ibid.*, 48–68. In McGann’s formulation, bibliographic codes are the counterpart of linguistic codes and should be given attention in the production of critical editions. McGann shows that editorial theory of the twentieth century has almost exclusively promoted producing critical editions of linguistic codes constrained by the author’s “final intentions.”

62 See exploration and discussion of relevant issues, including manuscript production, copying and circulation, in Myles McDonnell, “Writing, Copying, and Autograph Manuscripts in Ancient Rome,” *ClQ* 46, no. 2 (1996): 469–491, doi: 10.1093/cq/46.2.469; Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Harry Y. Gamble, “The Book Trade in the Roman Empire,” in *The Early Text of the New Testament*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23–36; Leighton D. Reynolds and Nigel G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–79.

63 The inverse of this observation underscores the fact that the critical editions upon which modern exegesis is based are themselves cultural artifacts and should not be treated as indexical to some Pauline autograph. David Parker gestures to this point when he describes the production of critical editions as themselves one of the ways of “making the New Testament.” David C. Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

64 This bibliography continues to grow. But foundational to this kind of scholarship is that of Bart D. Ehrman, who points to theological motivations behind scribal variants. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press,

of the “original text” – an “original text” itself bears noteworthy physical features and reflect numerous and conflicting intentions – as some more recent New Testament text critics seem to be, the fact that the extant manuscripts of Paul are all copies does not afford us the same sort of comparative possibilities as McKenzie has with Congreve. The manuscript copies of Pauline texts thus emerge as an appropriate site for criticism, but their artifactual status should not (within the formulation of McKenzie) come at the expense of consideration of the author. Erasing the influence of the author in regard to textual meaning and directing exclusive attention to, for example, the copyist and reader, does not fully appreciate the insight that intention is displaced among a variety of agents, including the text’s author.

It is here that the concept of the specter returns with productive force. A connection between haunting specters and textual materiality may seem irreconcilable. Ghosts often evoke ideas about immaterialities rather than materialities, but this may be overly restrictive of the possibilities of ghostly influence, which is felt but not always seen.⁶⁵ As John Modern suggests, specters can have “a strange materiality, a presence whose authority operates from a distance, affects the individual personality, and provokes responses in the form of human activities, techniques, and institutions.”⁶⁶ The effects of specters, operating from a distance, in Modern’s account, begin to sound very much like the contingencies of a book, as underscored by McKenzie and McGann. Ancient copyists and editors held great influence on the shape, contents, look and feel of ancient textual media. But these texts continue to interact in diverse ways with the ongoing influences of the authors, what I want to call the spectral authors. What follows demonstrates quite different configurations of intentionality materialized in two Pauline text-objects.

1993); and now more recently, Bart D. Ehrman, “The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, 2nd ed., NTTSD 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 803–830.

65 Lincoln and Lincoln identify a tendency among scholars of specters to limit spectrality to the immaterial and non-tangible. Lincoln and Lincoln, “Toward a Critical Hauntology,” 196.

66 Modern, *Secularism*, xv.

5 Interpreting Paul with an Elite Codex and an Amulet

5.1 *Constructing Paul in Codex Coislinianus*

The first artifact I turn to is a sixth-century parchment codex of the letters of Paul called Codex Coislinianus (H^P, 015).⁶⁷ It is a fragmentary manuscript – up to 90% of its leaves are missing by now – and its text is damaged, thanks to a ninth-century scribe tracing over the letters in corrosive ink.⁶⁸ What makes this manuscript of special interest are the paratextual materials that frame the text of the Pauline letters proper. Many of these elements are associated with what is called the “Euthalian apparatus,” a constellation of paratextual features attested in numerous medieval manuscripts of Acts and the Epistles. These materials include an extensive prologue of the life and work of Paul, as well as an editorial note concerning the production of this particular edition of Paul’s letters and the special materials and arrangement of the text that set it apart from other Pauline collections. The anonymous editor (known colloquially as Euthalius) claims to have divided the text into meaning units and prefixed the Pauline epistles with tables of chapter divisions with brief summaries (τῶν κεφαλαίων ἔκθεσιν), of “divine testimonies” (θείων ματυριῶν) and divisions of lections (ἀναγνώσει).⁶⁹ These materials appear to facilitate a variety of different reading needs, although the prologue implies that in general the paratexts and textual arrangement were meant to facilitate Christian instruction that was based on Paul’s own societal goals expressed through his letters.⁷⁰ Not all

67 D. Bernardi de Montfaucon first dates the manuscript to the fifth or sixth century. D. Bernardi de Montfaucon, *Bibliotheca Coisliniana olim Segueriana* (Paris, 1715), 261. Louis Duchesne’s edition dates it to the sixth century, while Henri Omont’s later edition agrees with Montfaucon’s larger date-range. See Louis Duchesne, “Fragments des Épîtres de S. Paul,” *AMSL* 3, no. 3 (1876): 420; Henri A. Omont, *Notice sur un très ancien Manuscrit Grec en Onciales des Épîtres de Saint Paul, conservé à Bibliothèque Nationale (H ad Epistulas Pauli)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1889), 7.

68 See Omont’s breakdown of the extant leaves and his discussion of the overwriting, which also adds breathing marks and accents. Omont, *Épîtres de Saint Paul*, 7–10.

69 The Greek text of the Euthalian prologue and its editorial notice is available in a number of editions. For the *editio princeps*, see Laurentius A. Zacagnius, *Collectanea Monumentorum Veterum Ecclesiae Graecae ac Latinae quae Hactenus in Vaticana Bibliotheca Delituerunt*, vol. 1 (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congreg. de Propag. Fide, 1698), 528–529. Vemund Blomkvist has also reprinted and translated von Soden’s text. Vemund Blomkvist, *Euthalian Traditions: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 107.

70 Both Nils Dahl and Eric Scherbenske agree on the instructional intentions of the Euthalian edition. However, Scherbenske suggests that the edition was designed to facilitate the editor’s catechetical and paraenetic goals, while Dahl sees its instructional context as post-baptismal. See Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul*, 125–126; Nils A. Dahl, “The ‘Euthalian Apparatus’ and Affiliated Argumenta,” in *Studies in Ephesians: Introductory Questions*,

of the Euthalian materials appear in Codex Coislinianus, although some of them, such as the prologue and table of lections, may have existed among the now-missing leaves. It is the prologue, only extant in medieval Byzantine manuscripts, that positions the Pauline letters firmly within the biography of Paul the Apostle, connected with his concern for proper conduct. However, even the few extant materials attest to the spectral presence of Paul that haunts the Pauline letters and links their interpretation to the authorial figure.

One of the simplest means of evoking authorship through textual editing occurs in titling, and Codex Coislinianus furnishes extensive titling through letter subscriptions and superscriptions, as well as with its chapter summaries (κεφαλαία/*kephalaia*). Such paratextual material is not exclusive to Codex Coislinianus, however, and other late antique biblical codices possess similar kinds of ancillary texts. In fact, even much earlier manuscripts, such as P46, include page numbers and letter superscriptions, including names of the individual letters, for example, πρὸς κορινθίουα̃ ("The First to the Corinthians") or πρὸς γαλατας ("To the Galatians").⁷¹ Into the fourth century and following, many manuscripts of Paul's letters, such as Codex Sinaiticus, included almost identical superscriptions. As David Trobisch has argued, this mode of titling according to addressee serves to bind the Pauline letters into a unified corpus, an editorial project producing a text that negotiates a diverse audience and unity of authorship.⁷²

Codex Coislinianus stands out among these late antique manuscripts with its more detailed titling system. As far as the extant material goes, each of the three examples of titles names both the addressee and author and is set apart from the rest of the text with decorations in red and black ink, along with borders in the case of subscriptions.⁷³ Thus, the superscription of Galatians reads: παύλου ἀποστόλου· ἐπιστολὴ πρ(ος) γαλατας ("Of Paul the Apostle, Epistle to

Text- & Edition-Critical Issues, Interpretation of Texts and Themes, ed. David Hellholm et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 234. See also Scherbenske's discussion of the editor's coordination of paratextual materials and editorial goals that purport to promote Paul's πολιτεία. Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul*, 123–136.

71 See Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri: Descriptions and Texts of Twelve Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, Fasc. 3 Supplement, Pauline Epistles (London: Emery Walker, 1936), 52 and 131, respectively. Images of these leaves are available online in a number of locations.

72 See David Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 24–27.

73 Only the following titling material remains: Galatians superscription (Mt. Athos fol. 7v), Hebrews superscription (BnF, Paris Suppl. 1074 fol. 6r), *Kephalaia* title for 1 Timothy (BnF, Paris Suppl. 1074 fol. 6v), Titus superscription (BnF, Coislin. 202 fol. 11v), and Titus subscription (BnF, Coislin. 202 fol. 13v).

the Galatians"; Mt. Athos fol. 7v).⁷⁴ Titles of each chapter summary are written much the same, although referencing their function within the chapter structure. Accordingly, the chapter title of 1 Timothy reads: κεφαλαια της τιμοθεου α επιστολης παυλου ("Chapters of the First Epistle to Timothy, of Paul"; BnF, Paris Suppl. 1074 fol. 6v).⁷⁵ If each letter had both modes of titling, the reader would be reminded doubly of Paul's authorship of each epistle prior to even reading the Pauline text. For example, the second summary in the 1 Timothy table reads: περι της εαυτου εκλογης εις ευαγγελιστην εκ διωκτου κατα χαριν θ(εο)υ ("concerning the selection of him as an evangelist after being a persecutor, according to the gift of God"). Drawing on the language of persecution and gift from the text of 1 Timothy 1:13–14 (see BnF, Paris Suppl. 1074 fol. 7v & 8r), the pronoun εαυτου requires the name of Paul in the title as its referent, in order to make any sense. In this instance, the titling of the *kephalaia* table collaborates with the chapter summary to draw out a sense of Pauline authorship. One of the special features of the *kephalaia* is their ability to serve as cross-referencing tools, similar in crucial ways to a modern-day table of contents. Ancient readers could flip back and forth between the chapter summaries and the corresponding texts, indicated by numbers placed in the margins.⁷⁶ Not only did the prefixed chapter summaries provide direction in the reading of the Pauline letter, but the table of titles of the chapter summaries also provided a consistent association of that reading program with the societal goals of the apostolic author.

Codex Coislinianus also has significantly developed letter subscriptions in comparison to contemporaneous Pauline manuscripts. Again, many of these subscriptions only indicate the recipients of the letter, mentioned already in the letter address, and occasionally include the presumed location of composition.⁷⁷ By contrast, Codex Coislinianus includes beautiful decorations in red and black ink, which enclose fairly lengthy subscriptions. Only the

74 See also Duchesne, "Fragments," 427; Kirsopp Lake, *Facsimiles of the Athos Fragments of Codex H of the Pauline Epistles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), opposite Plate 14.

75 See also Omont, *Épîtres de Saint Paul*, 41. Later manuscripts seem to drop the explicit reference to Paul and Zacagnius' *editio*, which reads: ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΑ Τῆς πρὸς Τιμόθεον ἐπιστολῆς πρώτης. Zacagnius, *Collectanea*, 688.

76 See Louis Ch. Willard, *A Critical Study of the Euthalian Apparatus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 47–56; Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul*, 141–146. Strangely, this section of 1 Timothy actually does not have a marginal numeral, in spite of the expectation prompted by the *kephalaia* table. Codex Coislinianus does have marginal numerals in some instances, but the numeration is defective for some reason.

77 For example, in Codex Alexandrinus, 1 Thessalonians closes with a brief notice that reads: πρὸς θεσσαλονικεῖς ἡ ἐγγραφὴ ἀπὸ ἀθηνῶν ("He wrote to the Thessalonians 1 from Athens," BL, Royal ms. 1 D 8, fol. 119r). Codex Vaticanus has similar subscriptions.

subscriptions to Hebrews and Titus remain, although the subscription to Hebrews is the most interesting in this case. The Hebrews subscription is the briefer of the two and reads as follows: *παυλου αποστολου επιστολη προς εβραιους· εγγραφη απο ιταλιας δια τιμοθεου· στιχοι ψγ* ("The Epistle of Paul the Apostle, to the Hebrews, written from Italy by Timothy." 703 lines; BnF, Paris Suppl. 1074 6r). Hebrews was frequently located among the Pauline epistles, though it was usually positioned near the end of the corpus, perhaps marking its marginal status.⁷⁸ With this particular subscription, however, the letter is explicitly associated with Paul as its author. It is also incorporated into a biography of Paul through the specification of its origin in Italy and the assertion of Timothy as amanuensis, neither of which are mentioned in the prologue. Not only does Hebrews' inclusion among the other Pauline letters demand its being read as a Pauline letter, but also the subscription to Hebrews that claims Pauline authorship would have made this mode of reading explicit.

The letter genre is itself evocative of authorship by virtue of the convention of naming the sender at the letter's beginning.⁷⁹ Collections of Paul's letters thus evoke a heightened sense of Pauline authorship through the consistent repetition of the same sender's name at the head of each letter.⁸⁰ Ancient letter collections were also editorial products, however. And the particular choices of editors, relative to ancient editorial conventions, emerge especially by studying the paratextual materials ancillary to the main text that was copied.

78 See Clare K. Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews*, WUNT 1/235 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 5–8.

79 See relevant discussion connecting the letter genre to particular configurations of authorship in John W. Marshall, "I Left You in Crete: Narrative Deception and Social Hierarchy in the Letter to Titus," *JBL* 127, no. 4 (2008): 785–789, doi: 10.2307/25610155. See also a more technical discussion of letter openings in documentary letters and Paul in Philip L. Tite, "How to Begin and Why: Diverse Functions of the Pauline Prescript within a Greco-Roman Context," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, *Pauline Studies* 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 57–100.

80 Granted, Paul is not the exclusively named sender of every letter in the collection, since Hebrews is anonymous and other letters such as 2 Corinthians name Timothy as co-sender. However, the *Corpus Paulinum*, as a book gathered together on the basis of author, is significant among ancient letter collections. Authorial letter collections, like those of Cicero or Pliny, often include letters received by that author as well as those they sent, thus breaking up the consistent repetition of the same authorial name. Such collections were also subject to a variety of organizational principles, such as arrangement according to theme, addressee or other more artistic principles. See discussion in Roy Gibson, "On the Nature of Ancient Letter Collections," *JRS* 102 (2012): 56–78, doi: 10.1017/S0075435812000019; Michele R. Salzmann, "Latin Letter Collections before Late Antiquity," in *Late Antique Letter Collections: A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide*, ed. Cristiana Sogno et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 13–37.

In the case of Codex Coislinianus, these paratextual materials run a gamut of diverse intentionalities. Editorial intervention emerges through a lengthy prologue and the imposition of other materials that frame the Pauline texts according to the editor's interests. Yet the editor's interests in this case center on the promotion of a reading program that explicitly reinforces a sense of Pauline authorship. It is tempting to suggest that the anonymous editor simply co-opts the Pauline voice towards his own catechetical ends, but the materials of the prologue reflect considerable investment in the life and goals of Paul. The spectral figure of a long-dead Paul materializes within the pages of Codex Coislinianus, as his authorial voice mingles with the editorial schema of an anonymous fourth-century editor and a sixth-century copyist.

5.2 *A Pauline Amulet and a Vanishing Author*

Codex Coislinianus represents one of the ways that Paul could imminently haunt his letters, inscribed into the paratexts of an edition of his letters through scribal embellishment. Conversely, the sixth-century amulet P. Vindob. G 26034 + P. Vindob. G 30453 represents a way in which Paul's authorial persona scarcely haunts his texts at all.⁸¹ The differences between the two artifacts run deep. Whereas Codex Coislinianus joins the numerous other elite late antique biblical codices meant for scholarly or liturgical use, P. Vindob. G 26034 + P. Vindob. G 30453 reflects humbler origins and users. This amulet displays fairly even, wide spacing between lines, and the script slants to the right, but it does not attain to the regular elegance seen in the formatting and script of Codex Coislinianus.⁸²

Like other scriptural amulets from late antique Egypt, it may have been produced by a mid-level member of the clergy for a low-status slave or freed person suffering from an illness, perhaps brought on by an evil spirit.⁸³ Herbert

81 Herbert Hunger dates the papyrus to the sixth century in his *editio princeps*, and Brice Jones agrees. Herbert Hunger, "Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek," *Biblos* 8 (1959): 11; updated in Herbert Hunger, "Ergänzungen zu zwei neutestamentlichen Papyrusfragmenten der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek," *Biblos* 19 (1970): 72–75; Brice C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity*, LNTS 554 (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 169.

82 See Jones, *New Testament Texts*, 168–169, for images and description.

83 The best evidence of clerical involvement comes from the Canon 36 of the Council of Laodicea, which bans clergy from producing amulets. The Greek text of the Canon can be found in Joannes Dominicus Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova, et Amplissima Collectio. Tomus Secundus Ab Anno CCCV. Ad Annum CCCXLVI* (Florence, 1759). The presence of liturgical formulas in many amulets also supports that clergy were involved in their production. See Theodore de Bruyn's and Jitse Dijkstra's checklist, which indicates those extant amulets containing liturgical formulas. Theodore S. de Bruyn and Jitse H. F.

Hunger describes a crease in the papyrus fragment that suggests that it had been folded up and tucked away in the pocket of a garment worn by its owner.⁸⁴ This was not a text to be read but an object to be worn. Still, the text on the papyrus was not without significance. This particular manuscript includes three excerpted portions of Pauline texts – 2 Corinthians 10:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and Ephesians 6:16 – a rarity among the numerous amulets recovered from late antiquity.⁸⁵ As Joseph Sanzo's recent study illustrates, a large portion of late antique amulets on a variety of media record incipits or beginning portions of the Gospels or of Psalms 90, sometimes as a way of drawing on healing power assigned to passages within those texts.⁸⁶ Other amulets cite narrative portions of Gospel texts, such as Matthew 4:23–24, in order to invoke the healing or exorcism recounted in the story.⁸⁷ P. Vindob. G 26034 + P. Vindob. G 30453 resembles these *historiolae* (i.e., narrative excerpts) more closely than incipit amulets, drawing upon and conflating portions of Pauline texts that evoke military language of battle against demonic enemies.

Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets," *BASP* 48 (2011): 163–216. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0599796.0048.001:14>. There is, however, no positive indication of the amulet's producer.

- 84 Hunger, "Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente," 12. John Cook, however, cautions against seeing folds and creases as sufficient and necessary evidence to name a papyrus fragment an amulet. John G. Cook, "P50 (P. Yale 1 3) and the Question of Its Function," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, *TENTS* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 120. It is worth noting then, that de Bruyn and Dijkstra consider this manuscript's status as an amulet to be "probable," one level below "certain," although Jones disputes this on the basis of the amulet content. de Bruyn and Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets and Formularies," 196–197; cf. Jones, *New Testament Texts*, 169.
- 85 In fact, this is the only amulet that contains these particular passages, prompting de Bruyn to be less certain about the fragment's status as an amulet. In contrast, Jones cites the staurogram that introduces the Pauline text and the invocation to the Lord to be faithful as sure indicators that this is indeed an amulet, produced by a scribe who felt free to creatively deploy passages from throughout Christian Scripture. Theodore S. de Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, *TENTS* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 162; cf. Jones, *New Testament Texts*, 170.
- 86 Joseph E. Sanzo's study differs from previous ones that understand Gospel incipits, for example, as invoking the four Gospels as entire texts. See Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 20–53, 158–161.
- 87 See David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical Historiola in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 451–470, on *historiolae*. Examples of amulets with the citation of Matthew 4:23–24 include P. Oxy. 8, 1077 and P. Turner 49.

Amulets instantiate a particular mode of textual excerpting that has little interest in questions of authorship. For amulet producers and even more so for amulet wearers, the Gospel incipits, healing narratives, invocations of deities and angels, along with other passages excerpted from Christian texts, contribute to the construction of objects of ritual power, not texts to be read and interpreted with reference to some authorial figure. Portions of texts attributed to Paul are indeed scrawled across the papyrus fibers of P. Vindob. G 26034 + P. Vindob. G 30453. In fact, this manuscript is fairly unique in its assemblage of texts excerpted exclusively from the Pauline corpus. Among the modest collection of late antique scriptural amulets, some incorporate a single scriptural text and occasionally insert other words of ritual power, while others combine passages from multiple biblical corpora.⁸⁸ A few papyrus amulets even excerpt a single Pauline passage (P. Berol. inv. 13977, 1 Tim 1:15–16; UC 32070, Col 3:9–10) or incorporate a Pauline excerpt alongside other biblical texts (P. Vindob. G 2312, John 2:1–2, Rom 12:1–2, Ps 90:1–2). Whereas all of these texts do not seem to invoke an authorial figure, the concentration of exclusively Pauline allusions in P. Vindob. G 26034 + P. Vindob. G 30453 suggests that the Pauline corpus was available to the scribe with a particular degree of conceptual, if not material, unity.⁸⁹ Portions of Pauline texts could be excerpted and blended coherently without the imposition of other powerful texts. The name or persona of Paul may not be immediately invoked in this particular text. But the name of Paul had facilitated the compilation of letters hundreds of years earlier,⁹⁰ and that act was still being felt even in the arrangement of texts inscribed on prophylactic amulets.

6 Conclusion

Let me return to, or perhaps resurrect, Cavan Concannon's call for the death of Paul. If the patterns of twentieth century authorship theory and postsecular theological philosophy tell us anything, Paul probably is not going to go

88 These are too many to list. Interested readers may consult de Bruyn and Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets and Formularies", along with transcriptions and discussion in Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 74–135, and Jones, *New Testament Texts*, 57–180.

89 Access to Pauline texts as singular collection is attested by the roughly contemporaneous Codex Coislinianus, Codex Claromontanus or Codex Freerianus, as well as in literary sources, such as Augustine, *Conf.* 8, 12, 29 (*PL* 32, 762). However, there is not enough evidence in this case to make a positive claim about how exactly the scribe came to know the texts he inscribed on the papyrus.

90 See Clarissa Breu, who defines one of the functions of author-names as "labels," in this volume, 131: "An author-name helps to classify different texts and to arrange them around a connective figure."

anywhere, regardless of how many Pauline scholars echo Concannon's call. However, thinking through the deaths and resurrections of God and especially of the author reveals that grappling with the implications of a figure pronounced dead can have productive results. In this essay, I have argued that the lingering of such figures, due to the failure of a theory to fully encompass them, can be characterized as haunting. One of the most significant characteristics of the author that has persisted throughout its theorizing is intentionality. And in fact, intentionality is one of the central engines that drives contemporary Pauline studies as it continually modifies and corrects portraits of the historical Paul based on the letters he is purported to have written. Drawing on insights from MacKenzie's "sociology of texts," I have argued that authorship is not the privileged domain of intentionality. So long as Pauline scholars are interested primarily in teasing out Pauline intentions from his letters, they will do so by extracting an intentioned Paul at the expense of the numerous intentionalities make and remake the texts we assign to Paul as an author. Intentionality dwells in collaborative domains that can span extensive periods of time. The Paul that remains for us is a spectral Paul, and those who wish to study him are indebted to the host of other intentionalities that produced the codices, amulets and numerous other artifacts that summon Paul back. Paul is dead! Long may his specter haunt us.

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The Good That I Mean I Do Not Say: Meaning, Intention, Psychology and Romans 7

A. K. M. Adam

1 Introduction

One could hardly imagine a more appropriate setting for an essay on unconscious dimensions of the possibility of exegesis apart from authorial intention than a symposium in Vienna, the city of Freud and Wittgenstein.¹ Yet – although “intention” (and unintentional expression) is an obviously psychological phenomenon – the psychological aspects of the question of authorial intention frequently go without consideration. This very silence should call for attention, especially when “intention” is conjoined with the disciplined pursuit of biblical exegesis, an interpretive practice with particularly prominent overdeterminations.

There is, as it were, a long short history of the interaction of psychology and biblical interpretation, beginning with Freud and Jung themselves,² through Albert Schweitzer’s analysis of Jesus,³ to more recent work of the Psychology and Biblical Studies Section of the Society of Biblical Literature⁴ and especially in the extensive research by Gerd Theissen and Eugen Drewermann.⁵ “Short,”

- 1 Stephen Karatheodoris fortuitously links Paul’s “For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom 7:15) with both Freud and Wittgenstein in the first paragraph of “Language, the Unconscious and the Formation of a Children’s Joke,” *Phenomenology + Pedagogy* 1, no. 3 (1983): 285.
- 2 Gerd Theissen treats Wilhelm Dilthey as the *fons et origo* of “hermeneutical psychology,” identifying particularly his “Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie,” as he asserts in *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 2, note 3.
- 3 Albert Schweitzer, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus: Exposition and Criticism* (Boston: Beacon, 1984).
- 4 Reflected in J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins, eds., *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scripture*, 4 vols. (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004), and in several essays from which I will refer later.
- 5 This essay makes no pretence of surveying the entire terrain of psychological exegesis, nor of providing a comprehensive bibliography; otherwise, I would devote much fuller attention to recent interventions by contemporary biblical Lacanians, as well as by Slavoj Žižek and

in that only a century and a half have passed since Franz Delitzsch closed the era of pre-clinical consideration of the Bible with his “System der biblischen Psychologie”;⁶ “long,” in that these years display constant, rapid change as the discipline of psychology advances, diverges into incommensurable schools, each of which then advances and evolves, and so on.⁷ The interest of ecclesiastical readers of the Bible (and psychological analysts of the church, as it were) in pastoral applications of psychological studies has produced a separate but lively subfield of readings of biblical narratives – although Dan Via’s warning from 1975 – “Fifty years or more is really long enough for ‘psychology’ to have been a dirty word in biblical studies”⁸ still conveys too accurate a picture of the relation of this field to the dominant culture of biblical interpretation.⁹ While conventional historical exegesis still overshadows the psychological study of the Bible, the niche that psychological approaches occupy has grown to a consistent flow of monographs and essays that bring to bear the insights of the psychological disciplines on the study of biblical texts.

Important as these steps are towards appreciating the relation of the human psyche to the biblical writings, an observer with hermeneutical interests may

scholars in dialogue with him. (The names of Ilona Rashkow and Ward Blanton come to mind immediately.)

- 6 Franz Delitzsch, *System der biblischen Psychologie* (Leipzig: Dorffling&Franke, 1855).
- 7 Current studies in affect theory, ably explored in Donovan Schaefer’s *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, MD et al.: Duke University Press, 2015), promise illuminating insights in discourses that are clearly highly inflected by affect; see the first-fruits of this intersection in *BibInt* 22, no. 4–5 (2014), a special issue edited by Stephen D. Moore and Jennifer Koosed, and dedicated to affect theory. Even more interesting is the prospect of an affective hermeneutics that eludes the verbal overdetermination of conventional biblical criticism.
- 8 Dan O. Via, Jr., “A Quandary of Contemporary New Testament Scholarship: The Time between the ‘Bultmanns,’” [review of Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction*], *JR* 55, no. 4 (1975): 459. See also Robin Scroggs, who reports a conversation with a colleague who stiffly explains that “Bultmann taught us years ago to be suspicious of psychology,” “Psychology as a Tool to Interpret the Text,” *ChrCent* 24, March (1982): 335 and Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 1: “Every exegete has learned that psychological exegesis is bad exegesis [.... T]he rejection of any combination of psychology and exegesis is often presented with such disarming obviousness that it is almost an offense against the good manners of historical-critical tradition that an attempt at psychological exegesis is nonetheless presented here.”
- 9 David Jobling cuts to the heart of the situation when he writes, “I was also conscious of the dead weight of an old-style ‘Freud and the Bible’ approach, based on mutual suspicion if not contempt, in which a few psychoanalytic enthusiasts used their models to explain biblical data, but were firmly rebuffed by biblical scholars. The dynamics of this encounter were tedious in the extreme,” in “Transference and Tact in Biblical Studies,” in *Reading Bible, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*, ed. Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn, *Biblical Limits* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 216.

particularly notice the extent to which these approaches *diverge* from one another. *Some* account of human psychology presumably provides the most reliable general account of mechanisms, motivations, contextual considerations and tendencies of human expression. Yet in our current situation, one cannot apply a *general* psychological perspective to one's interpretative endeavors; one must take sides with one of the paradigmatic fathers¹⁰ before one advances one's interpretation.¹¹ Indeed, the marginality of psychological discourse in biblical studies often requires devoting an initial section of one's research to an adulatory encomium to the chosen authority figure, followed by a simplified overview of his theoretical position, before one even begins to expound the biblical text. As a result, the byways of psychological biblical studies are cluttered with lobbying for favorites, repetitive (or conflicting) summarizations, and relatively shallow interactions with the biblical texts under consideration.

Nonetheless, we who study hermeneutics may without too much controversy take for granted one premise from the divergent, conflicting psychological schools in which we do not specialize: psychological mechanisms and forces outwit conscious, deliberate awareness *affect* and arguably *determine* our responses to the world we inhabit. Indeed, these mechanisms and forces are likely to operate with special power when we are interpreting a text in which we have a substantial existential investment as scholars. That likelihood increases again, inasmuch as the text in question has a unique status as a locus of cultural power; the Bible provides the basis for interpretations that stand to influence our behavior, our relations with one another and sometimes even the policies of national and international legislative bodies. A Freudian account of these unconscious influences on interpretation might foreground repression, sublimation and so on; a Jungian account of the unconscious, the role of myth and memory in human experience; a Lacanian, the libidinal economy; and so on. But the clue is in the label: All of these prominent schools of psychology take as a founding premise that conscious, deliberate intention is at the very least *colored* by, and in many cases *determined* by, unconscious forces and motivations. The entire field of psychological theory, science, practice and research rests on the premise that we are to a greater or lesser extent strangers to ourselves.

10 While one may cite Anna Freud, Karen Horney, Melanie Klein and perhaps the French poststructuralist theoreticians Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray (among others) as psychological "mothers," the overwhelming dominance of male theoreticians and the agonizing contestation among them for dominance in the field provide at least a provisional warrant for preserving the masculine metaphor.

11 Andrew Kille refers to psychological biblical criticism's "fragmentary and disconnected history," in Andrew D. Kille, *Psychological Biblical Criticism*, GBS. OTS (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 13.

The role of the unconscious in thought and action can be observed not only through psychoanalytic (or analytical-psychological) theory, but also through empirical studies on cognitive biases. Recent popular treatments, such as Dan Ariely's *Predictably Irrational*,¹² draw together the results of numerous studies of human behavior that demonstrate various ways in which human deliberation, even when it represents itself as painstakingly rational, follows consistent patterns that derive not from logic or critical thought but from biases that derive from phenomena as disparate as chronological sequence, phonology and the appearance of consensus or authority, to name a few. Of even more significance for our purposes, humans show a cognitive bias towards ascribing human-like agency to inanimate forces and objects.¹³ These cognitive biases operate not only on uninformed masses but on the scholars of cognitive bias themselves; while reasoned conclusions should not be glibly discounted as the effects of bias, neither should even the most sophisticated scholar be considered immune to the effects of cognitive bias simply on the basis of her or his general brilliance.

One should also note at this point that analytical and cognitive psychological studies of unconsciousness do not provide the only studies of human behavior that complicate the presumption of conscious, deliberate intention. Such philosophical meditations as G. E. M. Anscombe's classic *Intention*¹⁴ examine the conflicting, ambiguous consequences that attend our ascribing intent to an agent.¹⁵ Indeed, a recent review of a collection of essays about Anscombe and *Intention* observes that in the aftermath of her work, "the answers to [the] questions that constitute the 'standard view' in contemporary philosophy of action are hopeless."¹⁶ While it should not come as a surprise

12 Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions* (London: HarperCollins, 2009).

13 See recently Daniel Ulluci, "What Did He Say? The Ideas of Religious Experts and the 99%," in *Religious Competition in the Third Century CE: Jews, Christians, and the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Nathaniel DesRosiers et al., *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2014): 23, doi: 10.13109/9783666550683.21.

14 G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

15 Cf. also Shawn Kelley's discussion of the problem of "intention" in defining genocide in "Genocide, the Bible, and Biblical Scholarship," *Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Interpretation* 1, no. 3 (2016), 14–15, doi: 10.1163/24057657-12340003; as he remarked to me in an electronic message, "It was like revisiting 'the intentional fallacy' only with murder instead of poetry."

16 Rachael Wiseman, "Anscombe's Intention," *Jurisprudence* 6, no. 1 (2015): 182–193, doi: 10.5235/20403313.6.1.182.

that scholars of hermeneutics have not typically wrestled with this text,¹⁷ so intricate and obscure that many philosophers of action have scarcely studied it, the relevance of Anscombe's challenge to familiar accounts about intentional action warrants including it in any consideration of the role of authorial intention in the practice of interpretation – and at the very least, one must admit that Anscombe, along with the psychologists, problematizes any simple account of intention as an interpretive criterion. Among philosophers, as well as among cognitive scientists and psychologists, one must acknowledge that intention does not provide any straightforward canon by which to measure the legitimacy of an interpretation.

It should also go without saying – but since this essay concerns exactly the things that *are not* said, it *must* be said – that unselfconscious racial, gender and religious prejudice affect interpretation as well, even among biblical critics.¹⁸ At a cultural moment when virulent nationalism, anti-Islamic fervor, hostility to immigrants and white supremacy have surfaced in public discourse as explicit themes in the politics of one nation after another, we dare not risk the

17 Among those who have, Anscombe (as also Wittgenstein) has been invoked as a witness in favor of the criterion of authorial intention. Although space precludes a detailed argument here, this seems debatable if not outright wrong. Anscombe herself demurs about the relation of her work to literary interpretation: Touching on the relation of “motive” to “intention,” she writes, “I am very glad not to be writing either ethics or literary criticism, to which this question belongs,” *Intention* §12, 19. Even the most positive account of Anscombe on authorial intention, however, must allow that her subtle treatment of the topic contrasts sharply with the persistent demand that “authorial intention” provides the unique criterion for interpretive validity.

18 At this point in this thoroughly white (and straight, Euro-American and androcentric) essay, scholars attuned to the obligations of courtesy and responsibility (if not radical transformation of the discipline) typically catalogue a list of important scholars and works that might insulate them from the charge of perpetuating the dominance of conventional biblical criticism. This moment leaves me in a quandary; were I to omit it, I would clearly be bypassing important scholarship in the field and occluding the vast amount I have learned from Valerie Bridgeman, Cain Hope Felder, Renita Weems, Randall Bailey, Vincent Wimbush, Margaret Oget Aymer, Abraham Smith, Wil Gafney, Brian Blount, Nyasha Junior and many others in the field; but if I simply recapitulate this gesture, I perpetuate the facile credentialing behavior that adds names to the footnotes without actually changing the tenor of the essay (and in this case, omitting a catena of names of Asian, queer, feminist and other critics of the discipline). The problem is intensified by the extent to which psychology as a field is largely constituted as a white, Eurocentric, androcentric discipline. At the risk of performative contradiction and committing the sin I decry, I will simply submit that it ill befits an utterly conventional, straight, white, male, Christian biblical scholar to claim for himself the role of Promoter General of the cause of womanist, postcolonial, queer, disability, animal-rights and feminist scholarship and to listen attentively to instruction on how I might have constituted a better, more inclusive essay.

self-deception of trusting that participation in the biblical disciplines renders one immune to bigotry. Even when I entered the academic job market decades ago, my peers bemoaned the plight of the beleaguered straight, white, male scholar, who supposedly always lost out to women, to Blacks, to lesbian and gay scholars in applying for positions. These colleagues have been known to complain that the research of feminists, people of color and queer interpreters (among others) reflects identity politics and partisan, interested scholarship – that is, scholarship with interests that do not correspond specifically to those of conventional straight, white, male critics.¹⁹

All of this has been obvious for long years and can in no wise be considered a contribution to scholarship. At the same time, the occasion of a symposium on the role of authors and intention in biblical interpretation which did *not* mention the persistent effects of unconscious²⁰ prejudice would collaborate in perpetuating the self-protective silence of conventional criticism. Yet if the evidence is so obvious, and so pervasive, why do conventional biblical critics not take explicit account of it? Why, in other words, is the painfully obvious symptom displaced, repressed, abjected, rendered unspeakable?

Several possible reasons come to mind.

First, it might seem that since unconscious interference is universal, to one extent or another, it must all cancel out. Were one of us to invoke psychological effects as the basis for exegetes reaching particular conclusions, we would invite a *tu quoque* response. In order to avoid an infinite regress of amateur diagnosticians proposing childhood trauma or unresolved sexual motives as the background for one another's interpretive conclusions, conventional biblical critics keep silent²¹ about the entire topic – instead rehearsing the threadbare

19 In the sort of historical irony that ought not surprise any thoughtful reader, the admonition that “the relativity of human objectivity does not give us an excuse to excel in bias” (Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” in *IDB*, ed. George A. Buttrick [Nashville: Abingdon, 1962], 1: 422) – so often quoted by conventional critics in defense of the status quo – comes from an essay by Krister Stendahl, whose resolute, powerful commitment to the role of women in the church and academy presaged work by the current occupant of the Krister Stendahl Chair at Harvard Divinity School, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in whose work Stendahl recognized a fuller, stronger voice for interpretive praxis: “What I stammered in my hermeneutical writings 50 years ago, I now hear a hundred times clarified, amplified, and intensified in hers” (cited in Shelly Matthews et al., “Introduction: Walk in the Ways of Wisdom,” in *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2005), 14.

20 Assuming the best of my colleagues (although in the midst of a resurgence of crypto-fascist demagoguery, one cannot rule out the possibility that some exercise deliberate, considered prejudice).

21 Again, readers whose interpretive imperatives preclude silence in response to conventional biblical criticism are all the more readily ignored by conventional biblical critics,

expectation that “we must be as objective as we can,” regardless of which interests that stifles or conceals.

Second, almost no biblical scholars have the qualifications to speak with authority on another’s psychology, and for those with the qualification, it would be unprofessional to do so. How few academics have the moral courage to call out colleagues for explicit misogyny, anti-immigrant racism, anti-queer slanders or religious bias, even when it seems obvious and culpable? How much more difficult would it then be to acknowledge unconscious interpretive influences in the transactions of the discipline as a whole? How awkward to suggest it of apostolic authors! (We may recall the frequent pushback on suggestions that Paul, in particular, was “inconsistent,” to the effect that we *must* assume consistency of the Apostle or be guilty of disrespect to him; apparently disrespect falsifies arguments.)

Third, the discipline cannot acknowledge the very powerful influence that desire plays in interpretation. We need not ascribe *everything* in the field of biblical studies to the outworking of desire, but we should beware of suggesting that practitioners in our field have, in general, *escaped* the operations of desire in our interpretive labors. Biblical interpreters desire attention and affirmation (and employment!) for our often lonely, unrecognized labor; some desire support for religious (or irreligious) exegetical conclusions; some desire that our particular *flavor* of [ir]religion prevail over alternatives; some desire the confirmation of our pet theories (and the acclaim, prominence and benefits that accrue therefrom). How curious is it that radical scholars find so much evidence for a subversive Jesus (or a “bad Jesus”), that conservative scholars find a Jesus who affirms their theology of provident inerrancy, that socially alert liberal scholars find a “progressive” Jesus? It is of course exactly fitting that people – especially people who look to Jesus as a principle of authority – should generate biblical interpretations that cohere with their commitments (whether to Jesus, or to the God of Israel or to other complexes of belief and evidence and ideology); we must look for further clarification, though, when adherents of religious groups claim that *their* interpretation of their sacred texts escapes influence (if not outright “determination”) by premises internal to the group and should thereby be acknowledged by *others* on the sole ground of reason, science and facts. Certainly each of these desires is more prominent in some among us than in others, but the *manifest* operation of these desires among members of the biblical guild suggests an even greater *undercurrent* of desire at work less obviously in a broader range of interpretive circumstances

since they explicitly opt out of the “I’ll ignore your overdetermination if you’ll ignore mine” etiquette.

and a pervasive gravitational effect of desire in despite of evidence or reason (affecting our perception of what counts as evidence or reason).

Fourth, the great desire that fuels much activity in biblical studies is desire for interpretive *power*: the desire to control others' beliefs and practices, the authority to tell people what is right and what is wrong in biblical interpretations and (by extension, for many interpreters) to tell people what they must or must not believe, what they may or may not do and with whom. This desire for interpretive power warrants particular examination since it bears so little relation to reality (and thereby signals the operation of unconscious influences on deliberation). If biblical critics actually had any power over interpretation, *Left Behind* and *The da Vinci Code* would hardly have been published (much less have become mega-sellers). Parliament, the Nationalrat, the Bundesrat, might consult leading biblical scholars over policy matters or appoint professors as government ministers. Even within ecclesial bodies, biblical scholars frequently hold less power than do denominational hacks, flacks and popularizers. Considering the stakes of the interpretive arguments we conduct – life, death, freedom and eternal felicity or damnation – the actual effectual power of biblical scholars to influence anything in everyday life is pitifully (if prudently) small. That discrepancy between the fantasy of interpretive authority and its practical reality demonstrates one dimension of power that suppressed motivations hold over biblical interpreters.

Finally, we should not underestimate the problematic status of authorship itself for almost all of the texts that biblical scholars study. In very few cases do we have such evidence as might convince a near-consensus of scholars that one particular person can be identified as *the author* of a particular text; most of these documents are functionally anonymous. Even in the case of putatively undisputed authorial identity, the process of canonization and (especially) scribal transmission²² militate against arriving at what we might call “pure” authorship; the intentions the securely-identified author might have had when composing a letter (taking Paul as a particularly promising example of an identifiable author) have been subjected to editorial processes that inevitably inflect the expression of those intentions in the manuscripts. How might scholars call on intention as a criterion when they can hardly distinguish the Paul whose

22 The obvious point of reference here is Bart Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). The principle, however, holds true even for what seem impeccably orthodox (or supremely irrelevant) units of the texts. Everything about the biblical texts has been *mediated* in ways that obscure any “original” intention that might be ascribed to an author.

intention presumably came to expression in the Letter to the Romans from the first compiler of a letter collection or the copyists who transcribed the text?²³

The case, then, that the psychological phenomenon of “intention” – specifically “an author’s intention” – *must* provide the criterion of exegetical legitimacy for an interpretation falls short of realizing that goal under the cumulative weight of numerous obstacles.²⁴ Interpreters can only warrant their own interpretations as reliable by minimizing the actuality of unconscious influences on their conclusions, against all that we know of human deliberation in other circumstances. They fall prey to the same cognitive biases as other human beings.

In the face of such overwhelming evidence against the possibility of disentangling biblical interpretation from biases, what are we to say about the role of an author’s intention as a criterion for exegesis? First, perhaps, we must acknowledge that even the most scrupulous and nonpartisan of biblical exegetes does not escape the operation of influences of which they are not aware.

2 Psychological Approaches to Paul

Those who *do* bring psychological interests to bear in their biblical interpretation have devoted particular attention to Paul, presumably because he appears to represent a distinctively clear example of an identifiable individual with a strong personality. Paul’s explicit theologizing of torment (internal and external), his persistent concern about his self-representation and the starkness of his posited binary alternatives pique the diagnostic interest of would-be clinicians. Terrance Callan’s 1986 essay, “Competition and Boasting: Toward

23 For an elaborate paper on this special problem, see Gregory Peter Fewster’s contribution to this volume.

24 There is no bar whatsoever to particular reading communities putting a hypothetical authorial intention forward as their cardinal criterion for interpretation. Such communities will develop conventions for assessing what might or might not be a sound estimate of an original authorial intention, which considerations apply and which are ruled out and so on. No one need fear for the practice of biblical exegesis under the sign of the author! At the same time, the alleged necessity of such a focus institutes a local ideological mandate as a universal law – a gesture which, as I suggest above, depends on obscuring and overlooking the very many obstacles to ascertaining a universally compelling version of what this authoritative canon might amount to.

a Psychological Portrait of Paul,”²⁵ draws on research by Beverly Gaventa²⁶ to identify various readers’ approaches to Paul’s personality – she cites characterizations of “Paul persecut[ing] Christians [... as] an attempt to repress an unconscious Christ-complex,”²⁷ as well as Richard Rubenstein’s explanation that Paul converted because of “an ego-failure,” which was resolved by his adoption of faith in the Messiah who allegedly defeated the death Paul (supposedly) dreaded.²⁸ His apparent sudden changes of mood (as in Philippians 3:1–2, when the celebratory note of 3:1a – “Rejoice in the Lord” – modulates to the harsh “Beware the dogs!” of 3:2) and his tendency to grandiosity (“I am the least of the apostles,” 1 Cor 15:9; “God [...] set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace,” Gal 1:15, and many other examples) likewise attract psychological comments from Pauline scholars. Among cautious commentators, James Dunn refers to Paul’s “masochistic asceticism,”²⁹ and Joseph Fitzmyer sees the autobiographical background of Romans 7 as “a young Jewish boy passing from youthful innocence to adolescent experience and the requirements of the Mosaic Law.”³⁰ All of these, over and above the commonplace Christian inference that Paul was guilt-burdened as a Jew and the popular caricature of Paul as a sex-obsessed, self-hating repressed homosexual,³¹ exemplify the broad interest Paul has occasioned among psychologically-interested readers of his epistles.

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- 25 Terrance Callan, “Competition and Boasting: Toward a Psychological Portrait of Paul,” *ST* 40, no. 1 (1986): 137–156, doi: 10.1080/00393388608600046.
 - 26 Beverly Gaventa, *Paul’s Conversion: A Critical Sifting of the Epistolary Evidence* (Duke University diss., 1978).
 - 27 Callan, “Competition and Boasting,” 137, referring to Edward G. Selwyn, “St. Stephen’s Place in Christian Origins,” *Theology* 5, no. 30 (1922): 306–316, doi: 10.1177/0040571X2200503004.
 - 28 Ibid., drawing on Gaventa, who was in turn referring to Richard L. Rubenstein, *My Brother Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).
 - 29 James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 408.
 - 30 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York and London: Doubleday, 1933), 464.
 - 31 Although this position goes at least as far back as Sidney Tarachow, “St. Paul and Early Christianity,” in *Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences*, ed. Warner Muensterberger and Sidney Axelrad (New York: International University Press, 1955), 4: 223–227, it is most prominently associated with John Shelby Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1991), 109–120. Spong also ascribes to Paul the acute self-loathing (110) and “tremendous guilt and shame” (117) of a “tortured man” (113), all of which can only be explained, according to Spong, on the basis that Paul was a self-hating gay man.

Although contemporary interpreters' psychoanalysis of Paul often produces little more than a parodically shallow representation of a morbidly guilt-ridden apostle, modern exegetes conventionally turn to ancient psychology to illuminate Romans 7. Troels Engberg-Pedersen has produced a sterling example of applying the Aristotelian problem (picked up and articulated in Stoic philosophy) of ἀκρασία to illuminate Paul's explanation of the Torah's interaction with the self divided against itself.³² Just as Paul's first-person persona in Romans 7 confronts the challenge of a good that he recognizes but does not perform, the ancients wrestled with the problem of whether it was possible actually to know the good without doing it. Plato thought it impossible, that if one truly knows and understands the good, then one must necessarily act according to it.³³ Aristotle, on the other hand, argues that both lack of deliberation before action and submission to desires (over against considered judgment) exemplify situations in which an agent opts for a course of action known to be in conflict with the good.³⁴ The agent's *knowledge* of the good may be partial, or occluded; or *desire* may lend its motivational power to bring a particular course of action to the fore when an alternative that draws on a more general principle (for which no manifestly attractive instance lies at hand) fades to the background.³⁵ These various explanations perform the conventional

32 Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 240–246, and “The Reception of Graeco-Roman Culture in the New Testament: The Case of Romans 7:7–25,” in *The New Testament as Reception*, ed. Mogens Müller and Henrik Tronier, JSNTSup 230 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 32–57. A. J. M. van den Beld, “Romans 7:14–25 and the Problem of Akrasia,” *RelS* 21, no. 4 (1985): 495–515, doi: 10.1017/S0034412500017716 likewise analyzes Romans 7 as a case of ἀκρασία, though he approaches the topic from the field of philosophical ethics (in dialogue with Kenny, Hare and Davidson). Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology*, WUNT 2/256 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) applies a different ancient psychological model to Romans 7, holding it to exemplify an instance of the Platonic diagnosis of ἀκολασία, “soul death,” in which the appetites and the passions have utterly overcome reason's capacity to resist: “Galen elsewhere follows Aristotle in distinguishing ἀκρασία as a condition in which the mind regrets its bad actions, as opposed to worse conditions such as ἀκολασία, where the mind follows willingly.” In other words, in ἀκρασία the reasoning mind resists evil, but in cases of ἀκολασία the reasoning mind endorses the evil it enacts.

33 In the *Protagoras*, especially in the discussion that culminates in 358d, Aristotle considers this claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 7, 2, 1. The expectation that agents who have attained a particular status – whether knowledge of the good or faith in Christ – will no longer be subject to the appeal of transgressive impulses complicates both Platonic and Pauline ethical reasoning.

34 This account of Aristotle on ἀκρασία draws on the *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.

35 Aristotle uses the somewhat obscure example of a general mandate “Avoid that thing,” which is defeated by the principle “All sweet things are pleasant” and the presence of an

interpretive gesture of illuminating Paul's argument by appealing to discourses contemporary to him as more expansive instances of the same (or similar) line of thought. One can fit Paul's deliberation over the divergence between a good will and ethically deficient actions into any of several of these sophisticated ancient psychological schemata; in each case, his account of sin posits a force (whether internal or external, personal or mythical) that can prevail over conscious, benign intentions.

Gerd Theissen – in his painstakingly careful psychological examination of Pauline theology – rejects the comparison of Paul's reasoning in Romans 7 to ancient accounts of ἀκρασία. He rules out a Platonic cognitive viewpoint of ἀκρασία because the problem here arises not from misapprehension of the good but clearly from self-consciously choosing the worse rather than the better (“For I do not do the good I want”). The Aristotelian-Stoic account of ἀκρασία, in which passions overwhelm the will to do good, also fails to capture Paul's point, insofar as Theissen submits that the conflict in Romans 7 involves a clash of two laws, rather than a clash between the good Law and bad, sinful flesh.³⁶ Theissen takes up this conflict of two laws to make a case that, as valuable as the Hellenistic background may be, a full appreciation of Paul's argument in Romans 7 depends on reading with the benefit of contemporary psychological approaches.

Theissen writes as a somewhat eclectic proponent of three particular approaches to psychological exegesis. In the first instance, he expounds *learning theory* as a ground for tracing psychological conditions to the subject's response to stimuli from his or her environment; as Theissen uses learning theory, it principally concerns relations with the outside world. Second, he expounds a *psychodynamic* approach to examining the role of the unconscious as it affects the conscious subject. Under this heading, he treats Freud, Jung and other (and as Theissen notes, incompatible) psychological perspectives.³⁷

appealing sweet food (7, 3, 10). *Desire* for the particular sweet item overwhelms impartial consideration of the relative precedence of the two maxims.

36 Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 221. Paul W. Meyer's influential “The Worm at the Core of the Apple: Exegetical Considerations on Romans 7,” in *The Word in This World: Essays in New Testament Exegesis and Theology*, ed. John T. Carroll. NTL (Louisville, KY and London: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 57–77, joins Theissen's dismissal of the relevance of ancient analyses of ἀκρασία: “[I]t was Bultmann who clearly saw that the seemingly impressive parallels to Paul's language that can be found in Greek and Latin literature really have little to do with the purpose his words serve in the present argument” (Meyer, “Worm,” 74).

37 Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 27: “[T]he results are mutually contradictory.”

Third, he explores what he calls a *cognitive* approach,³⁸ which studies the subject's participation in a socially-defined, public lifeworld and his or her negotiation of a sense of self in interaction with given roles and possibilities.

He then reads Romans 7 from each of these three perspectives. His *learning-theoretical* treatment of Romans 7 describes Paul as having developed a negative association with the law that leads to frustration and anxiety but – having learned about Christ – as finding in the gospel a release from the anxiety provoked by the law and its threat of condemnation. His *psychodynamic* reading identifies Christ as the occasion of a crisis. On one hand, the law bears the stamp of divine (and social) authority, and must therefore be “holy, just, and good” (7:12); on the other hand, the law both provokes and condemns the pleasures of the flesh. The flesh, denied, thus intensifies a repressed resentment directed against the law that constricts its pleasure-seeking impulses. Christ – crucified under the law but perfectly innocent – brings this conflict to consciousness, and Paul, by identification with Christ (“it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”; Gal 2:20), is released from the libidinal *Besetzung* by adopting the new life of the resurrected Christ through a transference relationship with Christ. Finally, he proposes that a *cognitive* analysis of Paul's situation must read these verses as testimony to an existential conflict between two “different normative orientations and projections of the future [that] stand irreconcilably opposite each other.”³⁹ In Paul's case, these two normative orientations are the Mosaic Law (which Theissen argues is the same law as the law of death at work in Paul's members⁴⁰) and the new, fulfillable “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2). Paul resolves the existential conflict between his past life in Judaism and the new life in the Spirit by articulating elements of the particular way of life he left behind in more expansive terms, open to full participation of the Gentiles, “in such a way that it becomes a generally valid paradigm of a psychic event that affected many.”⁴¹ He concludes this three-part exposition with the somewhat anodyne proposal that “the change of experience and behavior depicted in the Pauline texts can be illumined from different perspectives. But a common thread also becomes visible: The decisive impulses for change in behavior and experience derive from the Christ symbolism.”⁴²

38 Theissen explicitly distances this approach from the more prevalent discourses of cognitive-behavioral therapy; his interest follows Jean Piaget's cognitive-developmental theory, often characterized now as “constructivism.” *Ibid.*, 30, note 2.

39 *Ibid.*, 259.

40 *Ibid.*, 255–257.

41 *Ibid.*, 260.

42 *Ibid.*, 265.

Theissen's representation of "psychodynamic" psychological readings, however, seems almost actively to avoid taking up perspectives rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis.⁴³ Conveniently, however, three scholars – Antoine Vergote, Georges Crespy and James J. Forsyth – propose Freudian readings of Romans 7, whose essays Theissen acknowledges only in passing.⁴⁴ Each in his own way parses the forces identified in Romans 7 – "I," "sin," "law," "death" and so on – into the Freudian/Lacanian *ego*, *superego* and *id* (*Je/Ça/Sur-Moi*). The connection seems obvious, given the prominence of sin/death, ἐγὼ, the law of the father and so on in Romans 7, although the precise outworking of the cognates requires that the analyst resist the simple equation of Pauline with Freudian terms in favor of a more patient reading.

Georges Crespy (a Reformed ecumenist, writing earliest of the three) first sets out a careful account of *id*, *ego* and *superego*. Submitting that both the *id* and the *superego* appear in language only indirectly, he suggests that the *superego* makes itself known by way of the law. If we further construe the *id* as the directionless locus of drives and impulses, Crespy proposes that it is not *id*/sin that directly leads to death, but rather the *superego*/law, inasmuch as the *id* (existing in a state of innocence, apart from the law [Rom 7:9]) is provoked to transgress by the *superego*'s efforts to restrain it.⁴⁵ The *superego* enlists the *ego* in a struggle against the *id* by leveraging an external agency to which it may appeal (the father, the law) against the *id*. But since the *id* and the *ego* are only imprecisely differentiated from one another, this device pits the *ego* against itself.⁴⁶ This situation, according to Crespy, corresponds roughly to the dynamic manifest in Romans 7: Sin only becomes defined as such in its opposition to the law (as the *id* has no direction in itself, but only as it opposes the *superego*).⁴⁷ "[... W]e have suggested interposing the *Id* between the *Ego*

43 As Jobling observes already in "Transference and Tact," 212. And is the omission of an index of contemporary authors (which would make it easier to track down Theissen's interactions with sources of psychological scholarship) strictly adventitious?

44 Although Vergote was an eminent psychologist of religion, Theissen cites his long Freudian appropriation of Romans 7 only three times – twice in passing, and once on page 228, note 17, in a note that simply acknowledges the existence of Vergote, Crespy (Protestant theologian, cited only there in the footnote mentioned above) and Forsyth (Canadian scholar of psychology of religion, cited there and 245, note 43).

45 Georges Crespy, "Exégèse et Psychoanalyse: Considérations Aventureuses sur Romains 7:7–25," in *L'Evangile, hier et aujourd'hui: Mélanges offerts au Professeur Franz-J. Leenhardt* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1968), 175–176.

46 Ibid., 174–176.

47 Ibid., 177: "Saint Paul characterizes it [desire, id, eros] as sin in relation to the law and not in itself." Translation C. B.; French original: "Saint Paul le [le désir, le Ça, l'éros] caractérise comme péché à partir de la Loi et non en soi."

and sin, and the *Superego* between the *Ego* and the law. This double interposition gives a better account, in our opinion, of the universal character of the drama described by St Paul.⁴⁸ Paul's "I" is caught between its emergence from undifferentiated desire (where no sin is reckoned) and its emergence towards its ideal condition (the attaining of which is indefinitely deferred by its as-yet-incomplete separation from desire).

Forsyth's short essay skims past his predecessors' analyses of Romans 7, relying principally on his reading of Freud to argue the case that Paul understands human life under three existential conditions: "man without the law, man under the law, and man under grace."⁴⁹ *Without* the law, the subject imagines, ignorantly, that in the absence of sin-as-transgression, one is truly alive. From the prospect of the subject without the law, awareness of sin brings the experience of guilt that Forsyth interprets as equivalent to death.⁵⁰ The advent of grace, however, relieves the subject of the obligation to satisfy the constrictive dictates of an alien law, and instead liberates the subject to pursue the good on the basis of love. Thus Forsyth reads the passage in question as an exposition of how the subject can be liberated from death by the "transformation of motives" that releases believers from deadly obedience to an extrinsic law and frees him or her to exercise an *agape* that functions as a Pauline alternative to Freud's *eros* – an alternative that (unlike *eros*) truly brings life because "[o]nly the gift of God's *agape*, received in faith, makes *eros* possible."⁵¹

Antoine Vergote's contribution to a symposium on exegesis and hermeneutics (published as "Exégèse et Herméneutique"⁵²) resembles Crespy's precedent, insofar as it explores the possible connections between the psychology of the *ego* with the Pauline ἐγώ. Vergote, however, devotes more time to reflection

48 Ibid.

49 James J. Forsyth, "Faith and Eros: Paul's Answer to Freud," *Religious Life* 46 (1976): 476.

50 Ibid., 478: "[H]e is clearly using the word 'death' to describe the experience of guilt, anxiety, and inner conflict which resulted from the painful awareness of his 'deeply rooted egoism' occasioned by his attempts to keep the law."

51 Ibid., 486. Although both Crespy and Vergote had already published their treatments of Romans 7 by the time Forsyth wrote his essay, it seems likely that he had not consulted their works, since Forsyth's discussion of the stages of human existence could have benefited significantly from even glancing contact with the two European theorists.

52 Antoine Vergote, "Apport des Données Psychoanalytiques à l'Exégèse: Vie, Loi, et Clivage du Moi dans l'Épître aux Romains 7 [followed by a "Table Ronde," 149–173]," in *Exégèse et Herméneutique*, ed. Xavier Léon-Dufour (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), 109–147. The conference is better known among Anglophone biblical scholars with an interest in hermeneutics because essays by Roland Barthes and Louis Marin subsequently found their way into Alfred M. Johnson, Jr., ed., *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Collection of Essays* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979) and several issues of *Semeia*.

on the relation of hermeneutics and psychology, handling similarities and differences with more nuanced conclusions.

Vergote takes for granted the threefold division of salvation history into life before the Torah, the regime of the Torah and the Christian condition, with Paul concentrating on the hinge point between the latter two epochs. In Romans 7, Paul narrates a retrospective account of what his life under the law must have been, since it is only after he adopted Christian faith that he could look back to perceive his plight⁵³ (which he could at the same time perceive as a universal human condition). This pattern recapitulates, according to Vergote, the universal experience of the *ego* attaining selfhood only by asserting itself over against the undifferentiated impulses of prepersonal existence. This also, however, generates an inevitable on-going conflict, which can only be overcome in a reconciliation between the *ego* and the father (the source of the law). He sees this correspondence not as a link between Pauline theology and Freudian psychology, nor as the imposition of the latter on the former; rather, he detects a *homology* between the way Paul characterized this inflection point in human existence and the way Freud characterized it. The pre-Œdipal impulses can be compared to the flesh, “which Paul designates not as evil, but as the locus of sin”;⁵⁴ the law that expresses divine justice but evokes awareness of sin is kin to the law that imposes interdictions en route to humanizing the subject, with the support of the father. From the invocation of this homology, Vergote goes on to study a series of Pauline paired opposites, showing in each instance the ways they support and inform his insight into the correspondence between Pauline theology and anthropology and psychology.

None of these scholars take the opportunity to devote extended consideration of the role of the unconscious in the interpretation of Romans 7, although when they turn their attention to Freud’s account of the *id*, the *Ça*, they wrestle with the premise of unconscious motivations and impulses as belonging to the Pauline *flesh*. None betray self-reflexive consideration of motives for or influences on their interpretation.⁵⁵ All eschew (for various reasons) analyzing any unconscious influences of Paul. In considering a passage that foregrounds the effect of powers over against the deliberate, conscious will of the agent, the psychological unconscious plays a surprisingly minor role.

53 In this respect, Vergote’s emphasis on Pauline retrospect foreshadows Ed P. Sanders’ well-known characterization of Pauline thought as moving from solution to plight.

54 Vergote, “Apport,” 132. Here Vergote challenges Crespy’s association of the *superego* with Pauline law; whereas both of these are extrinsic powers in Crespy, Vergote emphasizes that the psychological subject *forms* the *superego* by *internalizing* the law.

55 Jobling, “Transference and Tact,” has already laid this charge against Theissen’s interpretation of Paul.

Even in the limited scope of this survey of psychological attention to Romans 7 and the problems to which it might respond – reaching back to pre-Christian Platonic and Stoic analyses, and up to twentieth century psychoanalytic scholarship – one can observe intense speculative energy devoted to parsing the challenge of the divided self (or of Paul's inner torment or of whatever one takes the topic of Romans 7 to be). Some characteristics emerge in each of these, however, which echo the preliminary remarks from the first part of this essay.

As David Jobling has already noted with respect to Theissen's study, the discussion of the psychological dimensions of Romans 7 adheres strictly to an ideology of objectivity.⁵⁶ Indeed, the most thorough psychological examination of Romans 7, that of Vergote, makes repeated appeals to its objectivity. On one hand, he devotes an early portion of his essay to sketching the impossibility of objectivity (over against structuralist claims to have attained objective methods for interpreting texts) and to encouraging the premise that "to read a text is, in the end, to inhabit it as it is in itself, to bring together its multiple senses, and this according to orders of truth that transcend the fragment itself, but to which it contributes."⁵⁷ On the other hand, he argues that psychological study contributes to the objective study of texts.⁵⁸ At the same time, one should note that Vergote places a high value on the subjectivity by which one interacts with, assesses, interprets what one takes to be objective. Neither

56 Ibid. Throughout the article, but esp. 213–214, where Jobling also introduces what will be my next point relative to the other modern critics – namely, anti-Judaism.

57 Vergote, "Apport," 115.

58 Ibid., 117: "To decode the message of Paul as objectively as possible, we have to explain his anthropologic categories with the help of well-informed psychology that scrutinizes the dynamics and structures of contemporary humans and thus better evaluates both the cultural differences and the permanent structures of human beings." Translation C. B.; French original: "Pour décoder aussi objectivement que possible le message de Paul, il faut donc expliciter ses catégories anthropologiques à l'aide d'une psychologie informée qui, scrutant les dynamismes et les structures de l'homme contemporain, est en mesure de mieux apprécier tout à la fois les différences culturelles et les structures permanentes de l'être humain." The question of objectivity recurs in the round table discussion after the paper, in which Vergote responds to Léon-Dufour's interrogation of the relation of his proposal with Augustine's reading of Romans 7 by referring to his *objective* reading of Augustine.

As a separate matter, the metaphor of *decoding* the encrypted meaning in a text – a trope that both Vergote and Crespy deploy (Crespy, "Exégèse et Psychoanalyse," 170: "[...] other biblical texts don't lend themselves to the same decoding." Translation C. B.; French original: "[...] autres textes de la Bible ne se prêtent pas au même décryptage.") – itself problematically furthers the ideology of objectivity and singular meaning, as I will argue in another essay.

Crespy nor Forsyth make explicit their commitment to objectivity, but both manifest no qualification in their assertion of their psychological understanding of Romans 7. It is certainly difficult to avoid the rhetoric of factual, actual, “real” meaning in interpretive practice, but one can always at least signal awareness that “real meaning” is a problem; despite their active engagement with psychological discourses that trade in the effects of unconscious processes, one detects only rarely a hint that expression escapes perfect determination by conscious deliberation.

That voice of authorial confidence in Theissen and his three modern colleagues in psychological interpretation sounds especially unfortunate when one reads in each of these essays about the status of Judaism relative to these ostensibly objective diagnoses of humanity’s divided self. Although Paul at points certainly veers towards asserting God’s disapprobation of Judaism, he also extends himself to fend off the conclusion that God had rejected Israel or that the law was less than holy. The four psychologically-informed readings of Romans 7, however, unanimously treat the law as a burden, a trap, and assume without qualification that Christian faith entails a positive step beyond life in obedience to the Torah. Jobling faults Theissen for his curious silence concerning the Holocaust;⁵⁹ one might go further and note that Theissen unguardedly expresses his interpretation of Paul (and Freud) in terms inimical to Judaism: “Both Freud and Paul were Jews who had *emancipated* themselves from the Jewish tradition” and “Both sought a new, *more humane* relationship to the law.”⁶⁰ The other three scholars show much less hesitation in assuming Judaism to entail a less mature, less healthy religious alternative to Christianity. Crespy (citing Franz-J. Leenhardt, to whom the essay is dedicated) casually identifies “the Jew” as one who harbors the illusory hope that he can save himself, which expectation Leenhardt characterizes as “legalism.”⁶¹ Forsyth construes

59 Jobling, “Transference and Tact,” 213–214. He also notes Theissen’s complicity in “that special type of father-conflict which is Christian anti-semitism” (213).

60 Both sentences appear on 250, note 50 of Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, and in both cases the emphasis is mine.

61 “In other words, the situation of mankind under the law is exposed here and interpreted by one who is not victim of the illusory satisfaction that the law gives to him who, like the Jew, confides in it,” and further, “what counts for the Jew in particular counts for everyone confronted with some kind of law, that is, for every legalist who pretends to find favor with God.” Translation C. B.; French original: “En d’autres termes, ici est exposée la situation de l’homme sous la loi, mais interprétée par un homme qui n’est pas victime de l’illusoire satisfaction que la loi donne à celui qui, comme le juif, se confie en elle,” and further “ce qui est valable pour le juif en particulier est valable pour tout homme confronté à quelque loi que ce soit, c’est-à-dire pour tout homme qui se met dans la situation du légaliste,

the Torah solely as a “means of self-justification.”⁶² And Vergote’s analysis rests on the premise that Judaism belongs to the second of three phases of religion, which points to the fulfillment of religious faith in the grace of Christ. And as if all this were not reason enough to question these diagnoses of the psychological constitution of Pauline theology, a careful reader will note that the three psychological readings frame their interpretations in terms of human universals, leading to the conclusion that Judaism must be, psychologically speaking, a perpetual second best in humanity’s progression towards psychological wholeness.

One could comb these essays for reasons to give their authors the benefit of the doubt and to soft-pedal the deprecation of Judaism implicit in their writing; they were men of their time, and they reflect and pass on premises that they learned from their forebears. That would, however, require suppressing attention to particular symptoms and normalizing the pathology (however “mild”) of anti-Judaism. Moreover, as Willie J. Jennings⁶³ and J. Kameron Carter⁶⁴ have recently demonstrated, the assumption that Christians have inherited the promises to Israel and displaced the (theologically deficient) Jews goes hand in hand with white supremacism. Trusting that all these scholars bore the best will in the world towards their Jewish colleagues, one must acknowledge at least that they fell short in expressing that sympathy carefully.

This brings us, however, back to the heart of this essay’s concern: The *intentions* that issue from linguistic expressions, whether spoken or written, are not themselves in any way integral to the expression itself, and the expectation that a speculative reconstruction of intentions must govern as the paramount criterion of interpretations is itself embedded in cultural formations that support and affirm certain *kinds* of interpretation and discountenance others. Within certain circumstances, for particular reasons, one may very reasonably bracket questions of unconscious or subconscious motivation in order to get at the most probable historical account of what appears to have been the decisive intention that generated an utterance. In a clinical setting, however, a psychological practitioner must pay particular attention to *unintentional* utterances (paradigmatically in “Freudian slips,” in which unconscious impulses and sentiments come to expression via lapses in deliberate control of

prétendant obtenir par ses œuvres la faveur de Dieu,” cited from Leenhardt’s commentary on Romans without further specification, in Crespy, “Exégèse et Psychoanalyse,” 170.

62 Forsyth, “Faith and Eros,” 476, 479; 480: “[...] the necessity of [the believer’s] justifying himself by observing and fulfilling the law.”

63 Willie J. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

64 J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

expression) or omissions that may betoken the evasion of a painful, awkward circumstance. As the analytic essays on Romans 7 show, however, even when a discourse seeks to account for alien or unconscious stimuli for thought and action, specialists in human psychology avoid tackling directly the extent to which conscious deliberation falls short of explaining human behavior.⁶⁵

3 Consequences and Conclusions

What then shall we say? That we should disregard authorial intention altogether, in order that capricious interpretation may abound? This might not be as bad an alternative as the conventional rhetoric of hermeneutics tends to suppose; for all the ominous bugbears that interpreters cite in order to shore up the alleged necessity of adhering to historical authorial intention as the cardinal criterion of interpretive legitimacy, it is exceptionally difficult to find examples of practitioners actually generating interpretations that depart markedly from the prevailing norms of public discourse. Much more often one can point to examples of claims about historical authorial intention whose justification would not satisfy an accomplished technical interpreter. It may well be that the apologists for authorial intention overstate the risks and that we need not fear contra-intentional interpretation at all.

As an initial observation, it is worth recalling that we may agree on the general necessity of treating texts as *intentional* in some sense, without assenting to the tyranny of a reconstructed original author.⁶⁶ The assumption that beginning with the premise that a text (whether linguistic or non-linguistic) is *meaningful*, rather than being random gibberish or auditory static or an indistinct stench, implicates interpreters in positing some sort of *directedness* to the object of interpretation. One can, in other words, think of interpretation as an exercise in treating a text (which may be anything whatever that one interprets) *as if intended* to evoke a particular apprehension, whether that hypothetical intention be supported by evidence from history or psychology or

65 Moreover, none of the essays undertakes the self-reflective task of considering personal investments in the topic of Romans 7, even at the fairly obvious level of the essayists' theological commitments – the more intricate terrain of possible transference relationships, such as Jobling explores in his essay, are likewise overlooked.

66 A. K. M. Adam, "Author," in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000), 11–12. One may reasonably argue that geologists (for example) can interpret rock formations as texts, without anthropomorphically supposing them to bear the impress of intentionality; for an essay on exegesis and authorial intention, however, the general point holds.

anthropology or geology or theology or the conventions of landscape painting. Technical academic exegesis typically takes as its goal the production of an interpretation that best fits what can otherwise be known about the historical setting, personal characteristics of the putative author, formal characteristics of the text in question and so on. In that context, describing the hypothetical conscious intention of the author fits perfectly with the exercise.

Second, however, the posited authorial intention can never function as a reference point or criterion that transcends the discourse that produced it. That is, one may support an interpretation by saying, "I conclude that Paul probably intended to convey *this*, on the basis of *these* bits of evidence, such that the most fitting interpretation of Romans 7 should be *thus*" – but the particular inferred intention does not move beyond the status of an inference to that of a given datum. The intention one infers from various bits of evidence remains subject to the cornucopia of qualifications to which the first part of this essay points. "Intention" cannot be a simple, single, unqualified phenomenon in itself; it is often opaque even to the author-agent, and how much more to a critical observer relatively distant from the agent-author! It bears different denotations depending on the circumstances of use: in a law court or a literary essay or a football pitch or a psychoanalytic interview. One can restrict its sense by an array of conventional assumptions, but the resulting definition attains its usefulness precisely by excluding the hard cases that might well apply in any given case. By limiting possible complications, one limits the applicable scope of the term; limited intention functions in specific ways in specific contexts but cannot function as an overarching *sine qua non* of interpretive legitimacy.

Furthermore, as the psychological essays on Romans 7 illustrate, the relation of the unconscious to intention inflects interpretation in ways that exceed critics' capacity to comprehend. While Vergote, Forsyth and Crespy all apply a Freudian outlook on the unconscious to interpreting Paul, none of them even approaches exhausting the ways in which Romans and its interpreters are subject to unconscious influences. A given account of the unconscious provides helpful clues for interpreting Paul's discussion of psychology and will, but since there is no single account of the unconscious nor any univocal interpretation, or even an individual representation of the unconscious, when we acknowledge that expression and interpretation involve unconscious elements, we admit the relevance of an unsearchable plenitude of aspects and dimensions of possible meaning. Here as well, the gesture of insulating interpretive discourses from the churn and swirl of the unconscious resembles treating a country garden as the paradigm of botanical understanding while occluding awareness of tropical jungles.

Under such circumstances, with only highly qualified clarity regarding the notion of authorial intention in the first place, and with a sublime efflorescence of unconscious drives, impulses and affects impinging on both the initial expression and subsequent interpretations, practitioners of textual interpretation ought to reconcile themselves to the limited usefulness of authorial intention as a regulative principle. By according only a limited authority to this criterion, interpreters may approach more precisely the (indistinct) goal they seek, while at the same time relaxing their pretension to authority over interpretations that assign the author other sorts of relevance, or none. Interpreters who so adjust their sense of their own importance as arbiters of valid interpretation will at the same time be better attuned to the role that they manifestly do play in a world that cares little what they think; rather than a fantasy of universal sovereignty over fair and foul biblical exposition, they can find identities as well-informed, thoughtful observers whose counsel may be sought and heeded (or not) – somewhat in the way that psychologists themselves function.

4 Afterword

What of my own investment in Paul, in psychological interpretation, in the discourse of biblical hermeneutics? I rescind any far-reaching claims of self-knowledge; those acquainted with me, with my conduct and public participation in professional discourse, will assess the overdeterminations of this argument more acutely than I can. As a catholic-minded priest of the Church of England, I presumably favor interpretations of the Bible and of psychology that do not so contradict the Church's teachings and traditions that I cannot rationalize a reconciliation of the conflict. I favor a hermeneutic that embraces interpretive difference over one that pretends to adjudicate a single decisive interpretive standard; this may, I suppose, reflect my long-standing pattern of operating from the sidelines of my field, not as a dominant player who can claim centrality and authority. Mine is, to this extent, a hermeneutics for and from the discursive margins. I have been pressing a particular version of a hermeneutic that accounts for interpretive difference for more than thirty years in the conscious, deliberate effort to clarify the relation of the Bible to the historical, theological, political, artistic and various other ranges of practices and claims that derive from them, and this essay constitutes another contribution to that persistent endeavor. As to psychology, I am not partisan, though I have been impressed by the hermeneutical relevance of James Hillman's advocacy of dream interpretation by way of *amplification* of the dream – but that will be another essay for another time.

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Choreographing the Unchoreographable: Repetition and Disappearance in the Gospel of Mark

Henning Hupe

For Peter Lampe



1 Exploring a Choreographic Perspective¹

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is described as somebody who constantly enters new places, meets people, heals or preaches, but only to move on and enter other or “heterotopic” places and to meet other unique people, while traveling through the entire province of Galilee. The impression we thus receive of Jesus is that of a fast-moving and very busy person. From a *choreographic* point of view, however, these movements of the story’s main protagonist can be understood as sequences of a performance. In this sense they form a particular pattern of movements and a particular rhythm, which together can be said to translate into a sophisticated choreography. If we pursue this idea further, we must ask who the choreographer is and what his motives behind the selected settings might be. In fact, we will certainly want to ask what this choreography actually looks like.

William Forsythe, writing about “choreographic objects,” proposes the following helpful definition:

Choreography is the term that presides over a class of ideas: an idea is perhaps in this case a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action. To prohibit or constrain the substitution or mobilization of terms within this domain is counterintuitive. The introduction and examination of the effect of terminological substitutions that reveal previously

¹ I would like to thank Stefan Herbrechter for his great help with translating this essay.

invisible facets of the practice is key to the development of procedural strategies.²

If we assume that Mark – as the author of the Gospel of Mark – is indeed the one who is responsible for reconstructing the “course of action” in the Gospel, we can refer to him as its choreographer. This perspective also seems to correspond with current views in the wider academic community, which tend to see the author of the Gospel of Mark less as an “assembler” (or a mere collector of the various elements of the story) but as the *re-organizer* of Jesus’ trajectory, from his first movements around Galilee to the (preliminary) end of his movements, on the cross, in Jerusalem.

Mark, in this perspective, is no longer merely the scribe who assembles the narrative of Jesus’ story. And he is not using *kai*, his preferred connecting device, merely paratactically, due to his limited knowledge of Greek, as some might argue.

From a choreographic perspective, the paratactical *kai* can be understood as a device that produces a rhythm, which in turn creates a certain atmosphere of repetition, to the effect that parallel scenes can be perceived not only in their structural similarity but also in their difference, as I argue below.

However, if Mark is indeed a choreographer – and as such he would of course be responsible for the course of action, for the repetitions and the atmosphere they create – should we not also be able to develop a better idea of the principles which guided him? Let us therefore have a closer look at the text: οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε (“he is not here”) is what the young man in the tomb in 16:6 tells the women who are looking for Jesus. In fact, this is not the first time Jesus disappears or moves elsewhere. In 1:35 he leaves in order to pray in a solitary place (ἐξῆλθεν καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κάκει προσηύχετο), and later he proposes to go somewhere else (ἔξω) or, more generally, stays outside in lonely places (ἀλλ’ ἔξω ἐπ’ ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν; 1:45). In 3:7 he withdraws from the setting in some haste (ἀνεχώρησεν) and asks his disciples to find him a boat in which to escape from the masses thronging around him. He is thus often shown to leave places by a combination of the prefix ἐξ and the verb ἔρχομαι (in 1:35; 2:13; 5:2; 6:1; 7:31) – even when accompanied by his disciples (in 6:12, 54; 8:27; 11:11; 14:26).

He is also often shown on his own, while the others are together doing something else. In 4:38 he is the only one sleeping on the boat – on a cushion, a detail which is quite striking in its overdetermination: καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ἐν τῇ πρύμνῃ ἐπὶ τὸ προσκεφάλαιον καθεύδων – while the others are facing a storm. In 6:46 he

2 William Forsythe, “Suspense,” in *Catalogue Published on the Occasion of the Exhibition*, ed. Markus Weisbeck (Zürich: jrp|ringier, 2008), 5.

goes up on a mountainside to pray, having sent away his disciples. And later, while his disciples are on the boat in the middle of the lake, he is alone on land (καὶ αὐτὸς μόνος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; 6:47).

It is not only the Pharisees who want to restrict Jesus' exceptional freedom of movement in order to arrest and to kill him (ἐξήτουν αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι; 14:1 and κρατήσαντες ἀποκτείνωσιν; 12:12). Even his own relatives want to take charge of him (οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξήλθον κρατῆσαι αὐτόν; 3:21). And it is not only Jesus, the person, whom they want to pin down, unsuccessfully. It is of course also the message he preaches, the content of his speech, that they wish to contain. From the beginning, in 1:14, Jesus is preaching the good news and the kingdom of God (κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ), and, even if he does not do so explicitly, he also announces the end of time and the kingdom to come (1:15). However, the hidden meaning of what he preaches and teaches remains unclear; only later, when he is alone with his disciples, does he explain everything (κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς ἰδίοις μαθηταῖς ἐπέλυεν πάντα; 4:34). In 8:17, for example, his disciples do not understand when he asks them why they are still talking about having no bread. But what he really means when he says, "Do you still not see or understand?" remains unclear to them (οὐπω συνίετε; 8:21).

This, in turn, can be connected to God's "own words" in 9:7 after Jesus' transfiguration (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ). Here the text does not give any precise answers – neither with regard to the transfiguration nor to Jesus' disappointment and his potentially ironic question after the bread scene: "Do you still not understand?"

However, if we look at all this from a choreographic point of view, we could say that Mark's main protagonist, from the very beginning, displays a frequency of not only entering but also of leaving the scene of action. It thus becomes evident that Mark's Jesus is on his own particular trajectory, namely, he is on his way (out), away from the ones he has come to meet. This guiding principle seems as valid for his movements as it is for his teachings. In escaping from the setting, he leaves a double "blank" behind: a blank with regard to his (former) presence and a blank with regard to the explanation of his speech. This is not a new finding, however. What choreography can teach us here and what seems noteworthy is that these blanks *structure* the text and that they do so *from the very beginning*:

The blank. The thing which resists your gaze, your inquiry, your judgment, your scrutiny. The present leads me in a circle around itself, a blankness all of its own. Blankness I love as the thing which allows (invites, forces) you to read it again and again but which does not ever quite resolve. As the thing which refuses and invites. Blankness as the static

engine for pulling in your attention and keeping it there. The blank. Still and shifting at the same time. Nothing and everything.³

Choreographies are designed for a specific audience. To work with blanks in this context seems to be a good strategy for capturing and retaining attention, as Tim Etchells explains. His reference to “still and shifting at the same time” further illuminates this effect, namely, that a paradox has us running around in circles.

If we follow this line of thought and leave behind for a moment the established “facts” about Mark, which usually condition our readings, we might understand Mark’s text as a choreographic performance which not only captures our attention but also makes us go around in circles.

Therefore, I suggest that we take this choreography not only as a text written to preserve a story that otherwise may have been lost, but also as a story that everybody who is interested in the beginnings of the Christian community actually has to reenact for themselves. And let us further suppose that certain elements of this choreography were already commonly known by heart at the time the text was written. Then we can say that the final outcome and climax of the narrative will not have been much of a surprise: Jesus’ death on the cross, his body being laid in the tomb, the rolling back of the tomb stone, the women looking for him and the *neaniskos* (young man) who sends the women back to Galilee.

People at the time would have already known that Jesus had died, and they also would have known (or maybe believed) that something like a resurrection had taken place. So if the general plot of Jesus’ story was already known at the time when the Gospel of Mark was spreading, its narrative plot as such could not have been the central motive of interest. Even more so, it would be quite naïve to think that people would have read Mark’s story purely as just another narrative, that is, eager to get to the end in order to find out about the outcome of the story, or merely because they were appreciating the idea of a narrative containing all of the necessary parts of a story, that is, an introduction, a main body and a conclusion.

As an initial summary, Jesus’ repeated movements of entering and leaving particular scenes and settings – as well as the effects of these repetitions, echoes and *mises-en-abyme*, combined with the blanks referred to above, as well as the choice of rather “atmospheric” (if not poetic) language, together

3 Tim Etchells, “An Axe to Break the Frozen Sea,” in *Uncalled: Dance and Performance of the Future*, ed. Sigrid Gareis and Krassimira Kruschkova, *Recherchen* 68 (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2009), 210.

with the involvement of the audience – call for a *choreographic* reading of the Gospel of Mark.

2 Choreographic Repetitions

Jacques Derrida is known for his interest in the notion of repetition or iterability. It may come as a surprise to some, however, that he even speaks of a “law of iterability,” that repeats and folds the notion of repetition back on itself. What seems noteworthy for our particular context is that in the following quotation Derrida describes “folded,” “repeated” or “iterable” as “immediately applicable”:

But, as you know, because of the law of iterability which I tried to formalize – I didn’t discover this law, of course, it’s not my property; I did, however, attempt a kind of scientific formalization – because of this law, the uniqueness of every such unique gesture is immediately folded, repeated, iterable, that is, immediately applicable.⁴

What does “immediately applicable” refer to – what is it applicable to? One possibility is to translate (or “shift”) this notion. In this way, we come to understand “immediately applicable” as a “unique gesture” with regard to the “course of action.”

We can thus take the scenes in Mark 4 and 6 (and later, in chapter 8), in which the boat of the disciples is caught in a storm and in which they are fearing for their lives because the waves are threatening to swallow them, as an example of a setting that is readable (i.e., “immediately applicable”) in the form of a choreographic repetition.

Whereas in Mark 4 we are witnessing Jesus, who is sleeping in the boat on a cushion (4:38) while his disciples are in fear of drowning, in Mark 6 we see the disciples rowing against the wind and Jesus, who has been observing them from the shore (6:48). As they approach him, he climbs into the boat and the wind dies down. And later, in Mark 8 the disciples are in doubt as to whether they should get into the boat with only one loaf of bread, after which Jesus tells them to be careful and watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod (8:15). What exactly makes these scenes readable in the sense of choreographic repetition?

4 Jacques Derrida, “As if I Were Dead: An Interview with Jacques Derrida = Als ob ich tot wäre: Ein Interview mit Jacques Derrida,” ed. Ulrike Oudée Dünkelsbühler et al. (Wien: Turia und Kant, 2000), 24–26.

First of all, and maybe most obviously, it is simply because we have a repetition of a scene that shows the disciples in a boat. In all of the three scenes we encounter similar problems, which appear connected to sailing and which are then more or less resolved by Jesus' actions. However, what ties the scenes together is also a number of keywords that appear in the successive scenes: The fear of the disciples reappears in Mark 6 (4:40; 6:51), just as Jesus reappears when he calms the waves and the fear of the disciples. In Mark 8, when we read about their "hardened hearts," we observe once again how the disciples fail to grasp what is happening with regard to "the loaves" of bread (6:52; 8:17).

The specific benefit of a choreographic perspective is that it allows us to compare the repetitions of scenes and to describe their differences (or one might say, with Derrida, their *différance*). Whereas in Mark 4 the disciples fear the waves and are afraid of drowning, in Mark 6 they fear Jesus himself, or rather the ghost they take him to be. While the explanation of the disciples' behavior in Mark 6 is provided by the narrator ("they did not understand, their hearts were hardened"), in Mark 8 it is Jesus himself who criticizes his disciples and asks them directly, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand, are your hearts hardened?"

If we agree that there is repetition at work in these three scenes (or iterability, as a more choreographic language in line with Derrida would express it), our task will be to work out by close analysis the differences (or *différance*) between these similar scenes. In doing so, we can observe an increasing focus on the person of Jesus who (paradoxically) gains his importance by leaving the setting more and more frequently. In the first scene, the object of the disciples' fear are the waves (chapter 4); in the second scene, the disciples are afraid of Jesus himself (chapter 6), whereas in the third scene, the disciples are no longer criticized by the narrator but by the protagonist, that is, Jesus himself (chapter 8).

By shifting the focus of the keywords, the three scenes place the main emphasis on Jesus, the protagonist. However, it is Jesus who nevertheless continually seems to leave and disappear. Whereas he is fast asleep on board in Mark 4, he is no longer on the boat in Mark 6 (but is merely observing it from the land). In Mark 8 he does not even want to get into the boat but merely instructs the disciples from the shore and tells them what they have to watch out for. This simultaneity or synchrony, which arises from a focus on a protagonist who at the same time always seems to be about to disappear, can be described from a choreographic point of view as a *paradoxical* figure.

Let us now look at the evidence for both of these observations – or, if you prefer, both trajectories – in more detail, namely, by focusing on the disappearance of Jesus, the main protagonist.

2.1 *Focus on Jesus*

It seems obvious to state that the Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus, but why should this actually be so evident? First of all, the Gospel begins *with and as* the Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: We could therefore instead argue that it is John the Baptist who is the most interesting, independent and trustworthy figure (or even “prophet”; 1:32). John praises his successor and claims that he himself is unworthy even to stoop down and untie his sandals (1:7).

However, in the context of iterability, the most interesting point is that John actually announces that somebody will follow him (ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου; 1:7) and that the one who follows is indeed compelling and singular. Although people occasionally confound Jesus with John (8:28), Jesus nevertheless manages to develop his own profile. While John preaches change and *metanoia* (κηρύσσω βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν; 1:4), Jesus defends his law-breaking disciples against the accusations made by the Pharisees (2:25–27; 7:6–12). He who came to serve and to give his life as the redeemer of many (διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν; 10:45) expels those who sell and buy in the temple (11:15). His actions cause even people who know him to call him crazy (ἐξέστη; 3:21).

We could easily expand this list, but instead let us underline that Jesus has been announced as the successor, that he himself watches out for his followers and that he provides his followers not only with an explanation of his parables (4:34), but also with an explanation of what makes him unique: the *exousia* (6:7). Equipped with this *exousia*, which the Pharisees are so eager to have for themselves (11:28), his disciples will be able to do as he did. They will drive out many demons and will anoint and heal many sick (6:13).

So again, we can speak of an iteration, namely, in the sequence of John-Jesus-Jesus’ disciples. What makes Jesus interesting, however, is once again his difference. Whereas his disciples cannot help the (epileptic) boy in Mark 9, Jesus heals him just by praying and fasting (οὐδενὶ δύνάται ἐξελεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ; 9:29).

2.2 *The Disappearance of Jesus*

In Mark we see Jesus, the disappearing protagonist, not only in a series of boat scenes, but also in a series of teaching and healing scenes. Already at the very beginning, in Capernaum, he is presented with the sick or the ones possessed by demons – in fact, the whole city gathers at his door (1:32–33). Early the following morning, after helping and healing, Jesus withdraws to a lonely place and prays, while Simon and the others are looking for him (κατεδίωξεν αὐτὸν; 1:36). They tell him that everyone is looking for him (πάντες ζητοῦσιν σε; 1:37). A little later on, when he again withdraws, he is followed by many people wishing

to touch him (ὥστε ἐπιπίπτειν αὐτῷ ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἄψωνται; 3:10). Given the size of the crowd, Jesus decides to preach from a boat (3:9; 4:1). He also advises his disciples to come with him to a quiet place so that they can get some rest (6:31). Again, in this case we can speak of parallel scenes: After preaching and healing, Jesus escapes to a deserted place to get some peace and quiet while everybody is looking for him, and Jesus and his disciples go away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place (6:32).

However, it seems that Jesus has to be touched in his *splangchna* (literally, viscerally, in his bowels) to resume his preaching: In 6:34 (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη) he preaches to a crowd “without a shepherd”; in 8:2 (σπλαγχνίζομαι) there is a crowd with nothing to eat; and in 1:41 (σπλαγχνισθεῖς) there is the leper who fills him with compassion.

At this stage, let me recall the wider context: with the idea of iterability in mind, it becomes possible to read the plot of some of the healing stories in parallel with Jesus’ announcement of his own death and resurrection. If we compare the triple reference to his own suffering, execution and resurrection in Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:34 with the healing of the epileptic boy in chapter 9 or the healing or resurrection of Jairus’ daughter in 5, the very least we can say is that it is always this sequence – suffering, death and healing or resurrection – which is repeated. We hear that the spirit is trying to kill the epileptic boy (ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν; 9:22) and that Jairus’ daughter has, in fact, died (ἡ θυγάτηρ σου ἀπέθαν; 5:35) by the time Jesus arrives. Jesus, however, insists that she is not dead but merely asleep (τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει; 5:39), for which he is ridiculed (καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ; 5:40). So, once again, Jesus, the son of man, is suffering, as he will do and as he announces three additional times. In 10:34 he says that they will mock him again in the same way that they laughed at him in 5:40.

Furthermore, we could argue that there is a parallel between Jesus sleeping in the boat (ἐπὶ τὸ προσκεφάλαιον καθεύδων; 4:38) and Jairus’ daughter, whose sleep is mistaken for death. And just like Jairus’ daughter, he awakes and comes back to life again. We are thus observing an interrelation of motives (and characters) throughout the Gospel.

If we now further consider that the young man in the opened tomb in Mark 16 tells the women that Jesus is not there but that he has risen (ἡγέρθη; 16:6), and if we take into account that a form of *egeiro* is also used to designate the “rising” of Jairus’ daughter (5:41) or that of the epileptic boy (in 9:27) or indeed of Jesus’ awakening on the boat in 4:38 (and not *anhistemi* as it is used in 8:31, 9:31 and 10:34: ἀναστήσεται), we can surely conclude that all these scenes serve the same purpose and thus constitute a mode of iteration/iterability.

Looking at Jesus' rising at the end in chapter 16, we might even claim that the entire Gospel follows the pattern we observed in chapters 4, 6 and 8. In this sense, we understand that the brief suffering, healing and resurrection scenes resonate with the long final scene in 16, namely, the open tomb and the young man telling the women about Jesus' rising. We could, indeed, speak of an inverted *mise-en-abyme* structure. Instead of a "choreographic object" that becomes smaller and recedes (cf. Forsythe, above), we are dealing in this case with an object that increases in the end (which is no end).

3 Interconnecting Metaphors

To further pursue our argument, we might claim that the act of bringing Jesus back to life by awakening him (on the boat in the storm, in the company of his fearful disciples), could also be translated into (or, indeed, be interconnected with) a question of metaphors. As Derrida shows in "White Mythology," the opposition between the "proper" and the metaphoric sense depends on the fact that the proper itself can only be grasped through metaphors and thus escapes closure in an unstoppable movement of differing and deferral (i.e., *différance*): "[a]nd consequently to explode the reassuring opposition of the metaphoric and the proper, the opposition in which the one and the other have never done anything but reflect and refer to each other in their radiance."⁵

It is exactly this logic that we can also see at work in the iteration and sequencing of Jesus' appearing and disappearing in the Gospel. If we follow this line of argument, it becomes possible to read the different *egeiro* or the different boat sequences in the Gospel of Mark as interconnections of ideas that are illustrating, in an endless loop of metaphoric movement, that instead of a graspable "proper" meaning of the story there is in fact only the absence of closure.

To further indicate the consequences of such an approach: reading the iterated sequences in the form of a loop could mean, for instance, that the boat scenes translate (or interrelate with) the awakening of Jesus in Mark 4 into an anamnesis, or at least into a phantasmatic or spectral play of memories. Jesus awakes in the memories of his disciples (namely, as a *phantasma*, in the same sense that he is a ghost to them on the boat in Mark 6:49). It is as if later on, in Mark 8:14, they might have realized that "one loaf" would be entirely sufficient

5 Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 270–271.

to feed everyone; that is, *if* they had been able to understand Jesus' remark as a metaphor when, in Mark 8:18–21, he reminds them *metaphorically* of the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000 and asks them reproachfully, "Do you still not understand (οὐπω συνίετε; 8:21)?" Even though we do not receive a plain answer as to what the disciples indeed are supposed to understand, the metaphoric setting points towards a phantasmatic (spectral or ghostly) narrative loop that even refers back to Jesus' last supper in 14:22, where he himself "translates" (or transposes) the metaphor of breaking bread by saying, "Take it, this is my body" (λάβετε τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου).

The idea of taking something for (or in the place of) another, this exchanging of "choreographic objects," as William Forsythe would say,⁶ equally seems to be what Derrida understands when he uses the phrase "each other in their radiance." It is this play of exchanges that provokes the transposition of the proper and leads to what Derrida later calls the "retreat [*retrait*] of metaphor."

At the same time, this movement of transposition, this "continuous articulation of absence into presence," is also what Petrović Lotina, in another context, believes to be at work in Mette Edvardsen's choreographies, namely, an echo of quasi-transcendence:

The political dimension of art, which is manifested in the continuous articulation of "absence" into "presence," that is, in the contest between representation and its surplus – that we encounter in choreographed performances by Edvardsen – brings to the fore a philosophical trajectory of quasi-transcendence. Accordingly, the theory of quasi-transcendence echoes the play between absence and presence by means of contestation between the philosophical trajectories of immanence and transcendence.⁷

6 See the notion of and the emphasis on "transition" in Forsythe, "Suspense," 6: "As the blind mathematician Bernard Morin famously commented when asked where the imaging of the process of everting a sphere existed in his imagination, he replied 'Nowhere and everywhere at the same time.' And so it is with the choreographic object: it is a model of potential transition from one state to another in any space imaginable. An example of a similar transition already exists in another time based art practice: the musical score. A score represents the potential of perceptual phenomena to instigate action, the result of which can be perceived by a sense of a different order: a transition via the body from the visual to the aural. A choreographic object, or score, is by nature open to a full palette of phenomenological instigations because it acknowledges the body as wholly designed to persistently *read* every signal from its environment."

7 Goran Petrović Lotina, "Agonistic Objectification: Choreography as a Play between Abundance and Lack," *Performance Research* 21, no. 4 (2016), 35, doi: 10.1080/13528165.2016.1192865.

So what does this mean for the choreographies that we discovered in Mark? Could it be that Mark presents different links between the repeated movements of his main protagonist, as Jesus enters and leaves towns, seeks out lonely places, mountains or even boats (“heterotopia,” to use Foucault’s term)? Could it be that during these repeated movements, his presence diminishes while his absence becomes more and more tangible, while his attributes (*egeiro*, *exousia*, the sharing of loaves) are passed on to (or are exchanged with) the others around him: the epileptic boy, Jairus’ daughter or his disciples?

3.1 *Processes of Exchanging*

It might be the case that we are witnessing a Jesus who keeps going round in circles, withdrawing and announcing, again and again, his death and his resurrection. This has the effect that we ourselves face the prospect of death and resurrection, several times in different contexts, before they finally materialize. So could these contexts not indeed be *metaphorical* (Jesus asleep in a boat, the disciples who should trust him that one loaf of bread is enough) or, at least, could they not be parables themselves?

If so, we are in fact witnessing a choreographic technique of loops and repetitions structured by the continuous iteration of *kai* (as an in-between, a void and interval) that thematizes the “retreat” of the main protagonist. The metaphorical settings also offer a phantasmatic landscape of anamnesis and memory. Both aspects taken together constitute a phantasmatic frequency (or iterability) of death and resurrection, through which certain transpositions and exchanges are made possible. This could be in the sense of a *metamorphosis* (καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν; 9:2) or in the sense of the kind of *metanoia* John the Baptist preaches in 1:4 (κηρύσσω βαπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν).

To take up Krassimira Kruschkova’s argument, we might not only speak of simple repetitions or analogies but rather “scenic anagrams,”⁸ or processes of anagrammatic exchanges; these, however, in our case, go beyond the level of words as such, and one might therefore apply this logic to whole scenes, as Kruschkova suggests, or one might indeed also apply it to the very characteristics of the figures in the Gospel of Mark. Since Jesus is able to heal the so-called “Gerasene Demoniac” (5:1–20), it seems obvious that he has to share some specific characteristics with him: both are located in heterotopic places, namely, in or on a tomb and in the mountains (ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν; 5:5; see

8 Krassimira Kruschkova, “Szenische Anagramme: Zum Theater der Dekonstruktion,” in *Theater, Kunst, Wissenschaft: FS Wolfgang Greisenegger*, ed. Institut für Theater-, Film- und Medienwissenschaft, Universität Wien (Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2004), 229–238.

also 6:46 or 9:2 and 15:46). Both seem to be outside of a normal state of mind (3:21; in the literal sense of ἔξ-έστη; 5:2); they both are facing the prospect of being bound (5:3; 14:48); and both escape.

There is another instance of a parallel (or repetition) in this regard: in 14:48 Jesus bemoans the fact that people are attacking him with swords and clubs (μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων συλλαβεῖν με), while immediately following this scene, we encounter a young man who is also seized (καὶ κρατοῦσιν αὐτόν; 14:51) but who manages to flee, naked, leaving his garments behind. So, from a choreographic point of view, the instances of fleeing and being seized in the garden are tied ana-grammatically in a number of ways to Jesus:

- the iteration of the scene emphasizes the difference between the naked man who escapes and Jesus who is seized in the garden;
- while Jesus complains and speaks out, the *neaniskos* remains voiceless;
- the young man wears a linen garment, which he leaves behind in the garden, whereas Jesus is wrapped in a linen garment by Joseph of Arimathea in 15:46 (αὐτόν ἐνεῖλησεν τῇ σινδόνι);
- the young man in the tomb who speaks to the women in 16:5 is wearing a white robe (περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν), whereas Jesus' clothes become dazzling white in the transfiguration scene (καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν; 9:3);⁹
- Jesus, as a figure of retreat, flees from the tomb, while the naked *neaniskos* escapes from the garden.

4 Looking at Rhythm in Mark

When certain aspects and characteristics of the protagonists form an ana-grammatical exchange in a choreographic setting of iterated lines of movement, in the presence of metaphorical landscapes that are situated in a quasi-transcendental position, namely, the in-between space of performative presence and silent or voiceless absence, we might want to speak of a tentatively stable setting. Once this is established, it becomes possible to transfer this entire setting and look at its atmosphere and its rhythm – a rhythm which, in this specific case, is triggered by a continuous and silent *kai*.

9 It is worth bearing in mind that “white” is not only the traditional colour of the *phantasma*, but also a metonymic replacement for the *blank*; and in this particular case in 9:3, we even have the whitest of blanks possible: ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν, οἷα γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκάναι.

In order to perform such a shift, we can turn to the enigmatic, voiceless and naked young man fleeing in the garden.

On the stage the denuded performer offers itself as a pure surface of projection. The skin is turning into a screen, a canvas, an apparition. The zone of a purified aesthetics of “whatever” has, however, an ethical flip-side. If baring were a social not an aesthetic operation, baring life to the skin, to be bone, would mean being denuded of the very form of one’s life. The stage of performing and exposing bare existence is the witness to those complex aesthetic and ethical operations that can never call upon an innocent form to be safe.¹⁰

When Katherina Zakravsky creates a screen, a canvas based on an apparition of the skin of a denuded performer, we are reminded of the naked *neaniskos* who shares some of the characteristics of Zakravsky’s figure. In fact, as I would suggest, they are anagrammatically linked to each other. It seems immediately plausible or “immediately applicable,” as Derrida would say, to link the skin of the young man’s apparition to Jesus’ appearance as a ghost, or *phantasma* (6:49), to his disciples in the heterotopic (in-between) space of the lake. If we bear this in mind, it becomes possible to speak of Jesus’ sudden ghostly apparition on the lake as an event that triggers an experience of spectrality not only for his disciples but also for us, the contemporary spectators of the scene, in a sense that is similar to what Gerald Siegmund calls the “(é)mouvant” of the dancer:

As desiring bodies, we are moved by what we see as spectators. But the site of this moving and being moved is not the phenomenological presence of the dancers.

L’(é)mouvant, das Bewegende, as I would like to call it, takes place in the absence, that is to say in the interstices of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Moving and being moved is a question of that which is not present, but given as a negative space, as a *volume* of bodies and the phenomenologically empty spaces in-between the dancers’ bodies. This volume includes my own body as a spectator as a negative imprint. I am carried away, ghostlike and ghosted, to where I am not. The same holds true for the movement: the negative space of movement is that which is

10 Katherina Zakravsky, “Unbarable,” in *Uncalled: Dance and Performance of the Future*, ed. Sigrid Gareis and Krassimira Kruschkova, Recherchen 68 (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2009), 348.

not performed but given as a mere potential, a potential that functions as a barrier and friction towards the movement that is performed.¹¹

Following Siegmund, we can thus refer to these absences as “interstices of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real,” and we can therefore also argue that the Gospel of Mark can be read precisely as such an interstice or in-between space – which also implies an in-between time. In the transfiguration scene, Jesus encounters Elijah and Moses on the mountain (9:4), when God’s voice suddenly comes from another in-between space, in this case, a cloud (9:7).

The Gospel of Mark thus functions as an interstice, as an absence which relies on a protagonist who, quite paradoxically, retreats and remains ghostlike. The Gospel of Mark, however, can also be seen as a wake, as an act of mourning or, to be even more precise, as Derrida put it, as “a photograph of the feast in mourning”: “I am a dictation, pronounces poetry, learn me by heart, copy me down, guard and keep me, look out for me, look at me, dictated dictation, right before your eyes: soundtrack, *wake*, trail of light, photograph of the feast in mourning.”¹²

Derrida uses the English word “wake” in the original French to echo James Joyce, but maybe also because the idea of a wake, of staying awake or of keeping a “death watch” also evokes the possibility of an *awakening*, or, transposed into our context, an *egeiro*.

This would further allow us to claim that in the Gospel of Mark we are dealing with a text that is not just a more or less successful narrative of Jesus’ biography, but also a text that displays a certain rhythm. And this rhythm can be understood as a *poetical* undertone or atmosphere, in the sense Derrida speaks of poetry: “a poem must be brief, elliptical by vocation, whatever may be its objective or apparent expanse. Learned unconscious of *Verdichtung* and of the retreat.”¹³

Such a poetical reading of the Gospel is further supported by the fact that Jesus is touched in his *splanghna* (1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22) before he goes on to help others and that he often refers to the heart (11:23; 12:30, 33) or criticizes people for having hardened hearts (3:5; 6:52; 8:17; 10:5), which prevents them from understanding what otherwise would be obvious to them.

11 Gerald Siegmund, “The Desiring Body in Dance,” in *It Takes Place, when It Doesn’t: On Dance and Performance since 1989*, ed. Martina Hochmuth et al., Archiv für aktuelle Kunst (Frankfurt a. M.: Revolver, 2006), 84.

12 Jacques Derrida, “Che cos’è la poesia?” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York et al.: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 223.

13 Ibid., 225.

Jesus is not only touched in his *splangchna*, however; he also touches others in the literal, haptic sense in order to heal and help (1:41; 5:23; 5:41; 6:2, 5; 7:32–33; 10:16); additionally, people try to literally touch him in order to be healed (3:10; 5:27; 6:56; 8:22; 10:13). Thus, it seems possible that, in this movement of *touching/being touched*, metaphorical and material readings interconnect and reflect each other.¹⁴

5 Jesus, the Dancer

Jesus as a ghostly apparition on the lake is related to a naked *neaniskos* who is escaping from his guards. He is also related to the Gerasene Demoniac whom no one can bind and who is dancing on the tombs and mountains.

So, just as the *neaniskos* and the Gerasene, Jesus is a denuded performer, a ghostly medium to his spectators. It is thus on the *stage* of the Gospel where his “bare existence” is exposed, where he touches and is being touched. It is on this stage where he is “denuded of the very form of his life” (see Zakravsky above), where he thus loses his life and where his body turns into bread (the holy bread and the bread he breaks to feed the many) and where he is finally resurrected. In this sense, he also *is* poetry, a kind of edible, consumable poetry which delivers itself without any restraint: “Eat, drink, swallow my letter, carry it, transport it in you, like the law of a writing become your body: writing in (it) self.”¹⁵ This poetry, this writing, is not an innocent or naïve form. It demands the price of a whole life, like the widow who in Mark 12:44 gives her whole life or all she had to live on.

14 See the notion of “bodily contact with a text,” in Jacques Derrida, “Videor,” in Gary Hill, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 22: “On the other hand, concerning that which cannot be said about it [the blind passerby] and which remains encrypted in the bodily contact with another simulacrum, with a text that, as I was told and as I believed up until the last minute was ‘apocryphal’ (the more or less improvised that I dictated to myself, almost without seeing – only once – in truth, let be dictated to me like the truth of the oracular symptoms in the space of my own familial, tattered gnostic, those raveled fragments of the Gospel according to Thomas that Gary Hill put into my hands, the interrupted premeditations and the sheer chance of improvisation, the hasty crossing of repetitions or rehearsals in the course of an irreversible scene, which is to say unrehearsed, live, direct but without direction, in a direct that was to get carried away with itself, from itself in the course of a simulacrum of performance or presentation that would reveal that there is not and never has been a direct, live presentation [...]”

15 Ibid., 229.

The image of Jesus as a fleeing, crazy (ἐξέστη) dancer, a body dancing in or on the tombs, like the young boy he heals and who dances in chapter 9, also recalls Jean-Luc Nancy's description of dancing as illness:

Chorea,¹⁶ name of a disease, like the trembling or the one having the fidget, like the dance of Saint Guy. Contemporary disorder with a delusion, a fit that emerges: access to the body, access of the body, remedy of the soul. Crisis of Chorea, critical spelling of a separation from a singular place.¹⁷

Jesus' dance comes with a certain tremble. It is a trembling dance, one might say. People observing it lose their stability and, in their amazement, are transposed and displaced from their entire existence (ὥστε ἐξίστασθαι πάντας; 2:12; cf. 5:42), which again recalls the reaction of his disciples when they see his ghostlike apparition walking on the lake towards their boat, as the storm dies down (καὶ λίαν [ἐκ περισσοῦ] ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐξίσταντο; 6:51). And *trembling* and *ex-tasis* is also what the women feel in 16:8 after the *neaniskos* has told them that Jesus is not there but is in fact on his way back to Galilee. And, once again, what the women perform after hearing the *neaniskos* is to flee from the tomb (Καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις), that is, another anagrammatical event. They repeat what Jesus did; they become what he was by *leaving* their *stasis* behind (in the literal sense of ἔκ-στασις). Here we might also speak once more of a form of *metamorphosis* (similar to Jesus' metamorphosis in 9:2), or we might be reminded of Jesus' idea of succession in 8:34, which necessarily involves self-denial (εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν).

6 Mark, the Choreographer of Absence

As a dancing protagonist, Jesus himself becomes the "choreographic object." He is a ghostly dancer, the marked absence or blank the text employs to reorganize the dance of memory – the memory of his disciples, that of the people

16 The name is derived from Greek χορεία, "dance."

17 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Séparation de la Danse," in *Uncalled: Dance and Performance of the Future*, ed. Sigrid Gareis and Krassimira Kruschkova, Recherchen 68 (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2009), 223. Translation C. B.; French original: "Chorée, nom d'une maladie, comme la tremblante ou la bougeotte, comme la danse de Saint Guy. Désordre en phase avec un délire, un accès qui survient: accès au corps, accès de corps, solution de l'âme. Crise de chorée, graphie critique de la séparation d'un lieu singulier."

around him, but also that of his contemporary spectators. This memory shows Jesus, who announces his death over and over again, while helping others to rise from death, illness, blindness, deafness, numbness and maybe also dullness, like his disciples who are unable to remember the feeding scenes. Jesus, through his “dancing,” becomes a ransom, a *lutron*, for many (τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν; 10:45).

Let me recall that we referred to the setting in which the protagonist constantly and right from the beginning disappears and announces his death as a *paradox* setting.¹⁸ In the same sense, Jesus’ exclamation on the cross can be said to be paradox: The one who is addressed by Jesus is also the one who is being asked for his reasons for deserting him. Maybe we can therefore read another set of scenes as parallels in this context, namely, the one in which Jesus asks God, his father, for help and the one in which another father asks Jesus for help to heal his son. The latter scene, in 9:24, uses the identical paradoxical figure (εὐθὺς κράξας ὁ πατήρ τοῦ παιδίου ἔλεγεν· πιστεύω βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ).

It is quite remarkable that the one who is announced by John the Baptist and who is constantly presented as the most important character of the story is also the one who is always disappearing.

In a poetic context, this kind of paradox would surely be read as a sign of mourning, grief and loss. With all this in mind, I would therefore suggest that we should read the Gospel of Mark as choreography of loss, as a funeral speech delivered at the empty tomb. And the emptiness of the tomb, the biggest void at the end, marks the impossibility of possessing the one everybody wishes to possess, to touch, to hear, to bind and also to kill.

The young man in the open tomb, on the other hand, sends the women back, which means that the text of the Gospel, if read metaphorically, becomes this very walk to Galilee. It becomes the resurrection as such, if you like, beginning again, at the beginning, at the *arché*, all over again.

Can Mark, the author or choreographer of the absent, the choreographer of loss, really be the one responsible for such a choreography? Or is he rather the protagonist of his own text, an improvising dancer¹⁹ himself? Or might

18 See even the “contradictory grammar” that Forsythe, “Suspense,” 81, speaks of: “The fundamentally inconclusive and fantastically diverse nature of dance allows for an open-ended even contradictory grammar; descriptive constructs that are absolutely not absolute, analogues perhaps to Kantor’s suggestion that the set of all sets cannot contain itself. Dance describes itself, its processes and principles, to those who are willing to read without conclusions.”

19 For the concept of improvisation, see William Forsythe, “Observing Motion: An Interview with William Forsythe,” in *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, ed. Astrid Sommer, ZKM/Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Institute for Visual Media,

he actually be the dance, just like Jesus is the bread? “Therefore I imagine the performance as a field of potentiality, a certain rupture in time, and another time frame where there is no difference between the possible and the impossible event.”²⁰

Might it be possible that Mark himself underwent the experience of such a “rupture in time,” of such a trembling in his existence (of this *ἔκστασις*), as Bojana Kunst expresses it in the above quotation? Is it possible that he was touched by Jesus, the performer, the naked dancer, who gave himself to be eaten as bread? Maybe Mark experienced just such a ghostly encounter, one that left him behind with his loss and made him write it down, leaving his poetic text behind for us, just like the naked young man left his linen garment (*sindon*) in the garden for those who pursued him. The ones left behind, the *kataloipoi* – the *sindon* is also the *katalipos* (ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν; 14:52) – are the ones remaining on the stage, once the fog has disappeared and the curtain has fallen or, indeed, been torn apart – ruptured – to open up the scene once again.

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Tanzdokumente digital 2 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 21. In the interview Forsythe was asked the following: “How do you work with improvisation in the process of choreographing?” “The purpose of improvisation is to defeat choreography, to get back to what is primarily dancing. I consider choreography to be a secondary result of dancing. There is a truce between choreography and dancing. In the kind of complexity that I use, I want to make things that are irreproducible due to their temporal complexity. That’s part of the goal. So what you see in my solo, for example, is an attempt to defeat choreography. It contains choreographic phrases, but it would be so hard to reconstruct the timings that I don’t think it could survive as choreography. I think it would just be impossible to get that much coordination properly timed together.”

- 20 Bojana Kunst, “What Will Not Happen,” in *Uncalled: Dance and Performance of the Future*, ed. Sigrid Gareis and Krassimira Kruschkova, *Recherchen* 68 (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2009), 363.

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